

"CONFESSIONS!
OF A
HUMORIST" BY

O. HENRY

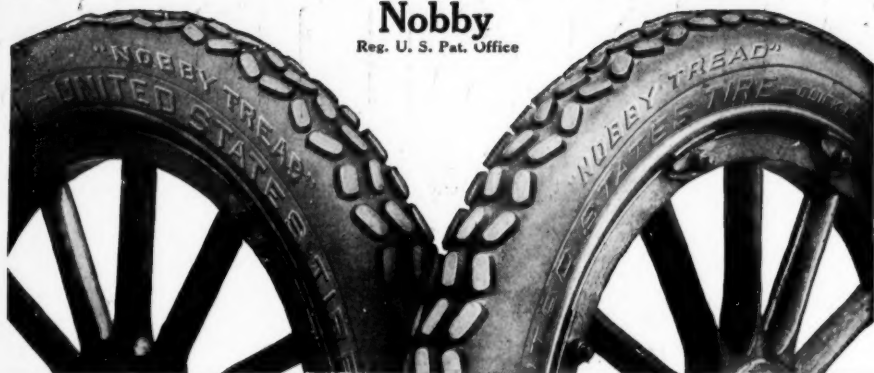
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THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXXIV. No. 4

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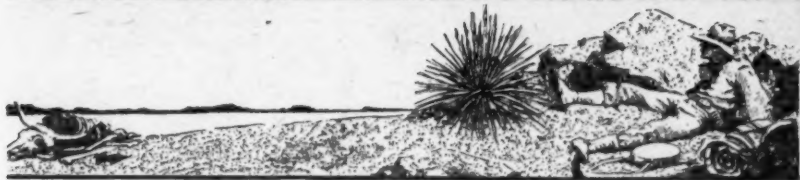
AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXXIV.

NOVEMBER, 1914.

No. 4.

The Valley of the Shadow



BY EDWARD S. MOFFAT

CHAPTER I.

WHEN Alva Leigh came home to her apartment in the dusk of the late February afternoon, she saw that her companion, Miss Ferguson, had come in before her and had lighted the electric above the little mahogany table in the hallway, so that Alva would not miss seeing the letter and roll of papers that had come for her.

A few years before, Alva would have opened both before she took off her overshoes or put her dripping umbrella in its stand, but she was now wearing black for the third time in her life, and she was also nearing the end of her second year in the public library on Forty-second Street, so that the arrival of mail no longer seemed to call for instant inquiry into its contents. She glanced instinctively at the address of the letter, nowever, because she had not heard from Donald since September. But the letter bore only a New York City postmark instead of one from California, and she saw that it was from the firm of Bagby & Vining, attor-

neys and counselors at law, 52 William Street.

Alva sighed. She realized that probably old Mr. Bagby wished to tell her something about her Uncle 'Tonio's bequests, and the thought brought up poignant memories of Antonio de la Fuente's kindnesses to her, an orphan.

Alva's mother had been a De la Fuente, and Alva's dark eyes and glowing pallor, and sometimes the carriage of her head when she was offended, proved her Spanish ancestry beyond much doubt. When she had gone to Farmington as a schoolgirl some ten years before, her chums had dubbed her "Carmen" almost on the first day, and had insisted on black-browed poses, with a murderous-looking can opener flashing out from under a bath-towel mantilla, while every one else lolled on her bed, applauded, and ate delectable mixtures of sardines and fudge.

But the Leigh part of Alva was measurably the stronger, and it was because she had resented Antonio de la Fuente's contempt for her father's business ability that she had never allowed her Uncle 'Tonio to help her. She had always

been fond of the quiet, dark little man with the wise, wrinkled old eyes and sympathetic smile, who shipped things back and forth across the seas from the spice-redolent offices down at Bowling Green, but the Puritan strain in the girl insisted grimly on loyalty to her father's memory, and so, when she had been left alone in the world, she had preferred to earn her own way instead of living on her uncle's money. She knew that she had offended the old gentleman terribly by so doing, and she was sorry that this was so, but she could not see that he respected her the less for it. In fact, she saw now that they two had always understood each other perfectly, and when she went to dine with him at his quiet hotel on Park Avenue, or sent him a gift at holiday time, it was with a genuine welling up of affection whose only stumblingblock was her pride.

Alva took off her street dress and freshened herself. Standing before her glass, she saw that she did not look as old as she felt to-night—that she was as beautifully bodied and as satin-skinned as any one she knew, while the starlike eyes that burned back at her out of the palely glowing face in the mirror were bright with health and vitality. But this was because she spent as much time as she could in the open air. Several of her old friends who had married well had places on Long Island and in the Westchester hills, and Alva's week-ends, when she took them, were packed with exercise.

In town, however, her amusements were few. Sometimes she lunched at the Holland House and went to a *matinée* with Natalie Warren, who persistently refused to give up her former roommate, and always scolded her roundly on the way home in the limousine. Sometimes she dined with Sally Lowe and her husband over on the Drive, because Alva's father had once taken Sally abroad with them as Alva's

chum. But although Alva Leigh could have gone almost where she liked among the big houses that border on the park, she had willfully allowed her circle to contract year by year until she had almost dropped out of sight. And now she was bereft even of the Warrens and the Lowes, for Natalie was up the Nile and Sally's husband had suddenly made a lot of money, and carried her off to Rome for a second honeymoon.

Alva thought of Natalie's last letter. Natalie knew why Alva had not married, and, writing from Sheppard's before they started, Mrs. Warren had expressed herself as finally out of patience.

"You have waited entirely too long," she had said. "No man nowadays has the right to ask a girl to wait for him longer than two years. Every one knows that mining men have their ups as well as their downs, but I think it is too much to stake a woman's youth against the possibility of finding some gold some time, somewhere in a rock! Jim says Donald ought to do his mining in Wall Street. Forgive me, dear. You know how strongly I feel."

Alva compressed her lips and went on with her dressing. She wondered what Natalie would have said if she'd known that Donald had not written to her for six months. Then she turned her back to the light over her dressing table and opened Mr. Bagby's letter. A few moments later Miss Nannie Ferguson, thin, fifty, and Scotch, whose ancient heart was still all unscarred by Man, received a distinct shock. Alva Leigh was standing in her doorway, her face ablaze with emotion.

"Nannie," she said, in a constrained voice, "I think our troubles are nearly over. *My uncle has made me his sole heir!*"

A moment or two necessarily had to be allowed the cautious Scot before she accepted the probability of this astounding

ing statement. But when the first outburst was over and they were seated side by side on the narrow Ferguson bed, Nannie showed that her eye for the main chance was by no means dimmed by the glamour of such miraculous good fortune.

"And now you can marry your man!" she said.

"And now I can marry—marry Donald!" Alva repeated, and her face shone as if lighted from within. "Oh, Nannie! Nannie! How did you know?"

"Know?" echoed the Scotswoman. "I know everything—and I know nothing. I know that you've been truer to this invisible young man for four long years than I fear I would be to the Angel Gabriel if I saw him every day. And I know that he must be a veritable extraordinary man for a girl like you to be thinking about for so long, much to the discouragement of others. I've seen his picture, and he has a bonnie face. More I canna say. Will ye no tell Nannie about him, dear?"

Alva turned a suffused face, then dropped her eyes and sought the other woman's hand.

"Oh, Nannie, dear—it's been such weary waiting!" she cried. "I could tell you every word he's ever said or written since the day we met, and where I saw him first, and what he thinks about, and how he talks, every gesture he makes, every turn of his head! But, oh—it all seems so far away now! I've thought about him for so many days and nights and weeks and months—I've thought—I've thought—" Her hand went to her throat as if she were suffocating.

"Child, you have thought too much," said Nannie. "Now that everything will turn out right, you must take a rest from thinking. You met him four years—no, five years ago—"

"Just after he came out of the School of Mines. But he had nothing in sight at that time—we knew we must wait.

And so he went West. Oh—he's so tall and so strong, Nannie, and so recklessly brave! He would go anywhere—do anything—to succeed, he said—and he has. But things have been against him. Two years ago he came back here to interest some people downtown in a mine in Idaho—"

"And to see you."

"And to see me. But he couldn't get them to do anything—he went away very badly discouraged." Alva's voice deepened, her face shadowed, she seemed on the point of entering her state of gentle melancholy again.

"Sakes alive, child!" cried Nannie, with a vigorous shake. "What do ye care about that noo? Can ye no buy him all the mines there are in this Idaho with your bright new siller? But I'm thinking you two will have little to do with mines from now on. You'll bring him back soon?"

"He'll come back—he'll come back as soon as a telegram can reach him and a train can carry him East!" Alva cried, throwing out her arms. "And then, Nannie!" A realization of how completely the making of their happiness now rested in her hands swept over the girl and her voice failed her.

Nannie Ferguson stroked the hand that was still closed tight on hers, and studied the girl's face. She loved Alva very much. The girl's nature was the most unselfish she had ever known, and added to the splendid courage and high-mindedness that were always manifest at once, Alva had an infinite number of lovable ways that showed themselves in the smaller things of life.

When Nannie had first come to live with her two years before, she had been surprised to find a woman with Alva's connections moving in so small a social orbit without serious discontent. But she had learned little by little that while Alva was tremendously sensitive as to her father's business failure and her altered position, yet she never allowed

these things to affect her relations with those around her. People who did not know Alva Leigh intimately sometimes thought her peculiar, but Nannie had found that this was due to the girl's unfailing faith in the man she had set her heart upon. Alva's pride forbade her taking up her old life again until she could do so as a successfully married woman. There was nothing more than that. The girl had simply been holding fast with unswerving allegiance to the chance for happiness that the future *must* bring.

But the shrewd Scotchwoman had never allowed her affections to warp her abilities to analyze, and she had been aware for some time past that the girl's attitude toward Donald Jaffray had been undergoing a serious change, unknown to herself. It was only natural that Alva should brood, but when Nannie saw that the girl was beginning to think more of marriage than of the man, she began to feel alarmed. She knew the force of the girl's character, sweet-natured though she was, and she had been afraid that it was being turned in the wrong direction. Alva's single-mindedness on the subject of her future life seemed about to turn into an obsession.

But that grave danger was over now, thank Heaven! And the wonderful light that shone in Alva's face was only a faint promise of the transfiguration soon to take place.

"You darling woman!" Nannie whispered softly. "You—with your head like a Spanish queen's, and your beautiful, strong body, and your wonderful love that's like both a sweetheart's and a mother's for your boy! If I were a man, with a man's blood and fire in me, wild horses could never have torn me away from you! And just to think that *now* you're to be married, after all!"

"*Married, after all!*" cried Alva a little wildly, while Nannie bit her lips over the unfortunate phrase. "And

why not? I've waited. I've been true. I've loved him since the day we met. Life promised him years ago. Life must give him to me now. Only one thing in the world can interfere. It's the very thing that has kept us apart, and yet it shall do so no longer. I've given him my youth to satisfy his pride—now he must stop our senseless sacrifices and listen to reason. It's time for us to live. Life is slipping too fast out of our fingers! I shall demand——"

"Child! Child! What are you saying?" Nannie interrupted, with a frightened gesture. "You'll no be '*demanding*' anything. Sit down again and calm yourself. Your good news has upset you."

Alva held her hand over her eyes for a moment and pulled herself together.

"Nannie," she said, with a sobbing laugh, "I'm so happy that I guess I'm losing my mind."

"You'll not lose your mind while I'm here," said Miss Ferguson forcefully. "You'll feel better after we've had our dinner."

The girl bent down and kissed the faded cheek.

"Look at me, Nannie," she said, with shining eyes. "I'm all right now. I lost my hold on myself for a moment, but it won't happen again. Perhaps our troubles were ended too quickly—or perhaps I've always imagined them to be greater than they really were. At any rate, the sour, dour Alva that you've been good enough to live with for two dark years herewith flits away, never, never, *never* to return." And Alva whirled out of the room with a half-suppressed *pæan* of joy.

"I'm going to see what's in this paper," Nannie heard her saying, in a voice like a song. "It's a marked copy of a little newspaper that they publish out there in that new mining camp. I've had them before, and they're screamingly funny." She came back

into the room tearing the wrapper from the paper and rolling it into a ball to hurl at Nannie.

"Just think of the fun if Donald had struck it rich, after all!"

"Aye," said the Scotchwoman. "I've heard of the West. 'Tis a place where strange things happen."

And then she looked up and saw that something strange was happening there in her own room before her own eyes, for Alva, with a bloodless face, was sinking slowly to the floor.

Donald had met with an accident. Donald had been shot.

Donald was dead.

Old Mr. Bagby, of Bagby & Vining, sat in his office waiting for Antonio de la Fuente's niece to be announced.

He had had charge of his friend De la Fuente's legal matters for a great many years, nearly half a century, in fact, and in that time he had come to know all that there was to know concerning the De la Fuentes and the Leighs. He had not seen Alva, however, since she was a girl of eighteen, and as usual he expected to see her comparatively unchanged. He was prepared, of course, to find her spirits affected by her uncle's death, but he did not imagine that they would be permanently dampened.

He was much surprised, therefore, to find Miss Leigh not only a grown woman, but also one who, he saw at once, had lately experienced a very great shock. As he pressed her hand for a moment with his soft, old fingers and smiled comfortingly and led her to a chair, he felt that the intense sadness in her face could not have been caused entirely by her uncle's death.

And so he spoke pleasantly of the last time he had seen her—only a year or so ago, he said, at which Alva smiled faintly—and told her of an act of kindness that her father had once done him

in their early life, and very soon established an *entente cordiale* such as old gentlemen, when they are deft as well as kind, have a way of bringing about.

And presently the talk turned on her uncle's affairs, and Alva learned that the business of De la Fuente y Cia was being continued as before—that it was a very profitable business—and that while she was now a wealthy woman, she would undoubtedly be much richer as time went on. Mr. Bagby was one of the executors under the will, and an officer of the company, and all her interests were being scrupulously cared for. After which she found her Uncle 'Tonio's old friend mentioning other things that did not greatly matter, and giving her opportunity for any questions she might like to ask.

"I have decided to go away for a time," Alva said finally, at which Mr. Bagby nodded approvingly.

"Abroad, no doubt," he said. "Please do not hesitate to have this office, or your own, help you in making your arrangements. Of course, you know you can spend virtually any amount you choose."

"I am not going abroad," Alva answered. "But I should like you to give me some money, and I shall leave instructions with you as to forwarding my mail. I shall also make my will."

Mr. Bagby gravely inclined his head. He was beginning to surmise that the saddened, but remarkably fine-looking, Miss Leigh was a purposeful woman.

"I should like to have the will drawn up now, if I may—and make the other arrangements, too."

"All that will be done immediately," Mr. Bagby said. "Would you care to tell me where you are going? And how long you may be gone?"

"I am going to California—to a place they call 'Death Valley,'" Alva said. "That is why I wish to make my will. It may be that I shall never return."

CHAPTER II.

A night wind, sweet with sage, streamed down the slopes of the Funerals and pulsed across a valley that had not yet been named. Concentrating at the mouth of Dead Horse Cañon, whose winding cut through the sandstone led down to a vaster and still more barren basin beyond, its quickening breath stirred the flames of a fire crackling in the sand of the wagon road, and whirled the sparks aloft in a gleaming spiral.

It caught up a whirl of dust, too, and flung it spitefully into the face of a woman who stood waist deep in the greasewood, staring into the fire with widened, frightened eyes. Then the space-filling whirl of the wind died away and the valley grew silent again—silent and impenetrable under a starless pall. Only there came from a distance the spasmodic galloping of a team of horses still held together by fragments of harness, and, from near by, the ironic crackle of flames around the name board of what, a little while before, had been the two-seated Magnet stage with its load of mail and baggage—"Passengers and express carefully transported between Amargosa and Death Valley."

With the slackening of the fire, the woman raised her fascinated eyes from the ruins, and moved a few steps away, striving to follow the vague ribbon of a road that faded into the west. As she stood so, with eyes full of worry, a sound of feet plodding through the soft, stone-crustured surface of the plain came to her ears. Another moment and the bulk of a horse and rider loomed up in front of her, grotesque and misshapen in outline. Dismounting a few feet away, the horseman left his animal standing with down-dropped rein, and came forward.

They faced each other across the embers of the fire, a tall woman with a queenly head of dark hair and dark, steady eyes, and a man a year or two

her senior, whose oil-smeared khaki and flannel shirt indicated employment near by, just as his quiet face promised honesty. Oddly enough, there was no need of explanations as to what had happened, for the stranger seemed to have a complete understanding of the situation. Her frown relaxed almost immediately when she saw his face in the firelight, and she went to him, pointing to a huddled shape a few feet away in the brush.

"The driver is over *there*," she said, unconscious of her low-voiced, tragic tones. "The horses kicked him in the head when they ran away."

"I'll look at him," the man answered pleasantly, but without haste, and he musingly touched a loop of glowing baling wire with the toe of his boot. "It will be 'Alkali Bill'—judging from the general results. Whisky and cigarette sparks seem to have been right active to-night. You carried some hay, I see."

"He *would* smoke—and drink," she stated tensely. "Before I knew it, we were all ablaze."

The man bent over the body and struck a match. She could see him only dimly as he knelt down, trying to catch a heartbeat, but once she was certain that she saw him studying his watch, which she thought curious. When he came forward again, he no longer wore a coat.

"He's in bad shape—we'll have to get him later," he said briefly, and she felt herself maneuvered into a position where the firelight shone directly on her face. "Did you save any of your baggage?"

"All I had," she answered, conscious of his eyes. "A shawl strap and a suit case. I was very fortunate."

"Yes, ma'am. Very lucky," he responded, in his easy way, still studying her over the hand that stroked his down-drooping, yellow mustache. "If you don't mind, perhaps we could be

going on about now. Magnet's not far. I'll get my horse."

With the animal standing beside her, she looked up into its owner's face with an expression of surprise. The unknown Samaritan's actions were so direct as hardly to give her time to appreciate their purposes.

"Am I to ride?" she asked, and realized at once that the question sounded foolish, even in her own ears.

"If you please, ma'am," as he shortened the stirrups and held one of them for her. "You might hold your suit case in front of you on the pommel. The other can go behind. There you go! Fine!" And after a rapid fastening of the shawl strap at the cante, he turned away from the fire, leading her mount by the rein into the vague roadway.

The woman balanced her luggage on the rocking pommel as best she could, and gave herself up to wonder. Hardly ten minutes ago she had been marooned on an unknown desert in impenetrable darkness. Now she found herself suddenly picked up and carried on her way again with a swiftness of action as unhesitating as it was amazing. It was a far cry from the security of last night's Pullman to riding out, she knew not with whom or whither, into this wide-stretching, unknown land where the very bulk of the wind meant vastness, and she felt her courage falter. Then it leaped up again stronger than ever as they gained the summit of a swell and saw a blurred gleam of white in the distance.

"Is *that* Magnet?" she asked, the words breaking from her with a cry.

Unstartled, the man let her animal come up to him, and answered her with thought, or else its amused counterfeit, in his tones.

"Well, now—it is little, isn't it?" he mused. "However could I have figured it was a 'city'! But we're only a year old, ma'am. We'll grow."

He continued to walk at the horse's head until the blur took on the shape of tiny one and two-roomed tent houses, scattered along a street of two short city blocks in length, which faded away up the western slope of the valley toward an opaque sky.

They paused again, and the woman stared at her goal with a clutching around her heart.

"You have friends here, have you?" the man asked, in a detached tone.

"No. No friends," she answered helplessly, unable to take her eyes off the place she had thought of, night and day, for so many months.

"H'mmm!" he mused. "In that case, you won't be accustomed to the ways here." There was light enough from the tents now to see her face, and he looked up with a direct and succinct remark: "This is no *pink-tea* place."

"I know that," the woman answered curtly, then bit her lip. Not yet there—and she had already made a misstep.

But her guide only nodded pleasantly. "Still—a pink tea would be a mighty interesting affair, I judge. The postmaster's wife could just about die from attention, 'most any day, as it is."

Her hand went up to her cheek in amazement.

"Are there no other women? I thought I saw one at the door of a tent."

"Mrs. Baker and you will be the only ladies, ma'am," he answered definitely. "I'm taking you to her place."

Up the straggling street between the glowworm tents the woman rode in the soft spring night on the stranger's horse, acutely observant of every makeshift for comfort seen through open doorways, keenly conscious of men—nothing but men—around her, behind her, in front of her, dawdling on doorsteps, passing by in the darkness in murmuring twos and threes, clustered around the bars of saloons where rau-

cous-voiced phonographs guttered forth their travesties on music, and drunken songs and still more drunken laughter roared up to God's clean stars, now gleaming whitely overhead.

Again the unfamiliar feeling of helplessness clutched at the woman's heart. Men—nothing but men—men in the rough, like the mines that had given this mushroom its riotous growth, and she only a solitary, friendless woman, with merely a purpose, which already seemed more like a forlorn hope, to hug to her breast for company.

At the end of the street her guide halted in front of a one-storied, unpainted frame building and spoke to a woman seated in the doorway.

"I guess you won't get a whole lot of mail to-night, Mrs. Baker," he said, in his pleasant voice. "I've brought you a boarder, instead. This lady has come to Magnet—to—to—" He paused and turned around.

"To stay," the woman on horseback supplied firmly, yet without sharpness. "If you don't mind, I'd like to get down."

"Why, yes. Come right in," Mrs. Baker responded, in matter-of-fact tones. "You can sleep on a cot in the mail room, dearie. The Palace Hotel hasn't established its branch here yet. Where's the funny old mail, Mr. Randall?"

"Burned up, along with the stage," he answered, as he carried the baggage through the post office into a lighted room beyond. "Alkali's been playing tricks on us again."

"That's twice this year already," the motherly-looking postmistress mused. "Folks will be complaining soon. Will you take your hat off, dearie? It's certainly a good thing Mr. Randall managed to find you—out there in the desert and all."

The traveler removed her hat and looked up at the tall man who had

brought her safely through the darkness.

Her first impression, now that she could see him clearly, was that he was thoroughly a man in face as well as in figure. His nose was sensitive and straight. His mouth, half hidden by the drooping, fine-haired mustache, she could not see, but his chin, indented, was unquestionably a chin, and his fine hazel eyes were both luminous and steady. In spite of his working clothes, he looked very clean, and, in some indefinable way, almost certainly a gentleman.

Her second impression, which came from something behind his repose of manner, was that this gravely smiling man, who seemed to be studying her closely for the second time, was to become either her very good friend or else something radically different. A third impression, which she did not care to retain, was that his was the stronger personality of the two.

But while she was speaking her thanks, all these appraisals were forgotten in a handclasp so firm and so wonderfully sympathetic as to pour a warming current of life into her tired body.

"Don't thank *me*, ma'am. A woman at Death Valley is worth even more than water—and *that's* fifteen dollars a barrel! Why—if I don't hurry along right now for poor Alkali, there'll be a committee camping on my trail with a wine supper!" He retreated, laughing, to the edge of the darkness, and picked up his horse's rein, swinging up to the saddle as easily as if it were early morning.

"So long, Mr. Randall," called the frankly admiring Mrs. Baker. "Get that Baker of mine away from the cards long enough to help with Bill!"

"Good night," the Samaritan responded. He drew the rein against the animal's neck to wheel away, then paused, and looked back with a sud-

den tenseness of pose that seemed to make his farewell carry the more surely past the postmistress to the traveler.

"Good night—Miss Leigh."

The woman in the doorway drew back with a gasp and stood there, staring mutely, until the other woman woke her from her amazement and led her to the room where she was to pass the night.

He had spoken her name!

And in this manner Alva Leigh came to the mining camp of Magnet, on the edge of Death Valley, unknown and unheralded through three thousand miles of travel, as had been her intention, only to hear her name spoken out of the darkness on the first night by an unknown man.

CHAPTER III.

In the morning she rose early, glad to escape the unfamiliar angles of the Baker cot, and studied the town from the doorway, her thoughtful face brightening at the wild freshness of the air and the wonderful, clean sunlight.

Before her a single street of tents—tent stores and garishly fronted tent saloons—ran down a gentle slope into a gray-green valley of plummy sage and greasewood, whose other side was a range of barren, chocolate-colored rhyolite. Beyond this, one after another, sterile chains of hills, yellow and flaring red and bluish gray, reared their spiny backs in serried rank until, across a vast, twinkling desert, the snow-tipped spear of Charleston Peak emerged from the mists and hung like a cold, white cloud, high in the sky.

Although her journey had left her by no means unprepared for the sight, yet the searching light of morning brought home the vastness of the view and its cruel barrenness with unescapable force. Coming out of a land of little hills, always decently garmented with earth, she found herself set down in

the midst of great ragged ranges as naked as the teeth of a saw. All her life Alva had been among green things, living things, houses, factories, stores, smoking chimneys—within hearing distance of people and the world's noises. Here was none of that—no green on the bare-toothed mountains—nothing of life and its activities beyond an occasional sound from the street—nothing to dispel a frightening sensation of loneliness in this vast, thirsty land of reds and yellows, where daring men braved the perils of heat and silence to dig ore out of the hot hills, to live a few vivid years of work and reckless pleasure, and then withdraw again, leaving behind them their youth, some holes in the ground, and a grinning stretch of sand and hills that would keep on grinning until the Judgment Day.

She looked again at the town with its dismaying clutter of ramshackle wagons, broken boxes, refuse, and glittering tin cans—at the unfamiliar head frames of the shafts—at the figures of men in their working clothes now turning out for the morning drink and breakfast, and she wondered—wondered where she was to begin.

Breakfast over, she turned to washing dishes as the easiest route to the knowledge that she must have, and, in due time, found part of it.

"Baker was wondering last night what you were figuring to do here," the postmistress remarked leadingly, as her observant eyes roved over Alva's handsome features and noted her ready disposal of the kitchen tasks. "But I told him you were looking for work, like as not."

"Yes. I expect to work," was the immediate reply, for Alva's instinct told her that she must justify her presence in Magnet without loss of time. "I must work at something right away. You all 'take a chance' out here—and so will I." Which facile expression of Western philosophy in her own voice

so amazed her that she flashed a warm smile at the other woman, and thereby cemented a friendship already in the making.

Yet Mrs. Baker's legitimate curiosity was not entirely appeased, and she let fall another remark.

"Not knowing where you come from, and nothing about you, I couldn't see it was a whole lot of Baker's business," she continued. "Mebbe she'll run a little store, I says—or mebbe a boarding house. No woman, I says, is coming into *this* layout of country without knowing her own mind, you bet.

"Now, a boarding house—well—that would be *my* choice. Not a single, solitary one here to-day except 'Stingy Pete's' short-order dump back of the Red Onion, and that's only 'Tee bones—French fried—Eggs-any-way—and Coffee. And, *say!* For a *single* girl, what with these rich Easterners and mining men coming here in their automobiles a-looking at mines, and all the nice young fellows working round—well, a boarding house, for real, high-toned society *and* money, surely does look good to me."

Alva Leigh, listening intently as she dried dishes, thanked her stars that Magnet held a Mrs. Baker. But she knew that, while her purpose might always be her own, she could not keep silent about herself forever, and so she expressed her surprise at the difference between the West and New York in various vague ways that intimated future confidences.

"But it's a hard life," the Westerner said, as she paused in her work and stared thoughtfully out of the window at the lifeless hills. "Just why Baker and me stick at it—I dunno. Times we make a little money on a claim or something, and times we don't. Times we live down to 'Los' in a bungalow, with roses and geraniums smothering you to death with their funny smells, and other

years we're out on the desert, polishing the head of a drill.

"But if Magnet makes good, we'll be fixed till kingdom come, I guess. Baker's got good ground, and he's sure the ore is right. I only hope we can make some Easterner think so, too. They're getting to know entirely too much about mines, back there. One of them came here last winter in tortoise-shell eyeglasses and a thousand-dollar fur coat to look at our ground, and what do you suppose he said?

"'Ah, ha!' says he, looking at me over his glasses like a wise little pig that's been fooled once on cactus. 'But does the ore go down, Mrs. Baker? That's the point on which you must satisfy me. Does it go *down*?'"

"'Well,' says I, kind of tired, 'I don't know what you learn in your little books back East, but it's a lead-pipe cinch it don't go *up*, dearie!' And with that he shut himself up in his big coat, and wouldn't peep.

"Baker only laughed when I said I'd spoiled his sale. Baker ain't bad—for a man. He's a Native Son of the Golden West, and *he* knows our luck will turn. Most likely he's testing it out on the wheel right now. We won three hundred last night.

"And yet I sort of like it all," Mrs. Baker went on, unmindful of the amazement in Alva's face. "It seems like this desert country gets a hold on you just because there ain't anything here! If I told any one that I liked hot rocks better than trees, or sand better than nice green grass, they'd think I was crazy. But you'll see, dearie. You'll get to like it, same as me."

"Is Magnet a healthful place?" Alva asked presently. "Do many people die here?"

"Die? What for?" responded Mrs. Baker absently. "Oh, a few get shot up sometimes, and they were finally obliged to hang one man that pestered another fellow with an ax. The ceme-

tery's right out behind us on the hill—you can see the headboards from the back window. Mostly, the epigrams are fairly considerate. It's all over when he's dead, you know. But Magnet's a pretty decent place—for a camp where there ain't any law."

"What did you say?" Alva asked sharply.

"No law, I said. No sheriff—no justice—no police—no nobody. But we get along. The committee fixes things up mostly. If the local decides against a man, he has to go, *and go right away!* They sent out two this last week—fifty miles to the railroad—*and no water!*"

"Has there *never* been a sheriff?" Alva asked, while she tried to keep something out of her voice that persisted in creeping in.

"Not that I ever heard of. He's generally over at Independence, the county seat—four days' journey," the other woman answered, with a wondering glance at Alva's depressed face. "Oh, don't you worry, dearie. Nothing can happen to you. Give Magnet a little old-fashioned home cooking, and these men will rob the bank for you."

Alva spread her dishcloth out to dry on the window sill. "I think I'll take a walk up on the hill," she said. "I'd like to get a view of the town."

The Westerner nodded appreciatively.

"Yes. Go look round a bit," she said, in her big, friendly way. "Go up on the top of the hill and look down into the valley. You'll see hell, then—sure enough."

"What valley?" Alva asked, without thinking.

"Death Valley. There ain't but one," was the reply. "*But don't look at it too long.* Folks have to keep happy out here," and Mrs. Baker's shrewd eyes seemed trying to read the girl's thoughts, "or else they go to brooding and get *queer*. But you won't be that

kind, I guess. *You're* going to have luck in this place. I'm thinking you'll go out of here a great deal happier than when you came in."

Alva went out of the door with the honestly meant words repeating themselves over and over in her mind. Magnet and luck! Death Valley—and *happiness!* It was entirely possible that she might have luck, but it would be of a peculiar kind.

Five graves in all raised their small mounds in the scattered brush of the hillside, and, after looking about her to see if any one were watching, she paused by the first, and read its inscription:

Jim Bellingham,
Died January 21st.

God gives a good deal to an honest dealer.

Alva wondered—and passed on, her brow darkening, her lips compressed. She saw that there were points of view that she would have to learn. Another grave, and she read:

Swiss Bob.

Fired his last shot, August 12th.

First man dead in camp. He went loco.

Some says heat—but we bet on whisky.

The woman made an involuntary sound of disgust. *Why* did men say such cruel things about one another? Had they no sense of decency or fitness? Yet the sardonic note did not escape her—a grim jest at the perils of this dreadful place where men never had been meant to live.

Two more mounds, with later dates, came under her eyes, and then, a little apart from the others and set in the soft, sandy earth below a reef of copper-stained rock, a headboard on which the writing, although dimmed by the elements, stood out with a clearness entirely sufficient:

Donald Jaffray,
February 10th.
Found shot.

"Found shot."

Well—at least there was nothing unnecessary written *there*.

Staring, dry-eyed, at the thing she had come all those thousands of miles to see, the woman found herself thanking God that here truth had guided the writer's hand without a tremor. It was well worth her journey—worth all such troubles, past and to come—to find above his grave anything so packed with meaning as those two short words, for, to Alva Leigh, they meant her justification. Just as she had always known since that day a month before, Donald had been murdered—brutally and with malice aforethought—and he who had shot him had run away.

She raised her head and looked out across the wide cup of the valley at the serried ranges. Wherever she dwelt again in memory's dreams, it was far from Magnet, for there were trees and grass and sweet running water before her eyes, and murmuring in her ears a lovable, boyish voice, impetuously vowing something over and over again. Once more she saw him in all the splendor of his youth—tall, strong, alert, bright-haired, bright-eyed; a joking, fearless, impetuous man-boy, whose tremendous physical vigor had been as much a source of fear for him as it had been a fascination in his love. Years of companionship, the ecstasy of being needed by another human being, the precious fulfillment of life's purposes, the wider existence—these were the things, then, of which this place had robbed her, for they all lay buried forever in the mound beneath her feet.

Yet, after all, it was the conviction of personal outrage that had most brought about her coming to this place. While Alva Leigh was as completely removed from ordinary selfishness as a woman may be, and although she herself believed her purpose to be absolutely free from vindictiveness, her passionate nature insisted that when life had offered her the most desirable of all

its gifts, and man had ruthlessly swept it away, then some one beside herself must suffer.

But as she stood there on the hillside, she felt the tumult of her feelings gradually subside. At least one part of her task was done—she had found him. As to the rest of it, she realized very sensibly that only the merest beginning had been made. To learn all that she must know—to act on it and bring it all to a just ending—would take time and thought and care. Therefore, she would be thorough and unhurried. *Her* day would come—she had no fear of that.

And so this was where they had buried him!—here on these bright slopes where he had penciled his last letter to her months ago—here where he would be always looking out on the mystic desert twinkling at his feet. And, after all, what better place? Where would she herself have laid her lover down for his last sleep but on this sun-warmed hillside, where his brave, steady eyes could gaze forever on the soft lure of the mountains and his beautiful body lie, dry and unsullied, in the virgin sand he loved?—a clean, warm winding sheet for one who had striven for *her* gain and *her* happiness in this frightful place, only to be wantonly cut down.

She thought of Mrs. Baker's prophecy.

"Then I wish for luck! God grant me *luck*!" she cried bitterly, but shuddered at the meaning she put into the bright word. "I will sow my life away in chances—only *let me reap*!"

As she turned away, a sound of voices came to her. Two men came into view on the dike of rock above her, and stood with their backs toward her, absorbed in conversation.

"Leaving out the ground we're standing on, you can have the other five claims for a thousand dollars apiece," said a voice that she recognized.

"I've been figuring to hold out *this* one for myself."

"And let *us* do your prospecting for you," was the intelligent response, as the other broke a fragment of ore over a sharp rock and weighed it instinctively in his hand before he studied it. "Come, now. Why don't you put a figure on this claim, too? I'll be perfectly frank and say it's the best of the lot."

"You don't have to be frank," was the amused reply. "I know it's the best. But I have another purpose for this ground."

To Alva, listening, came the realization that with the opening of a mine on that spot, the little cemetery would almost certainly pass out of existence. A faint chill stole over her. What would these men do to her grave?

"It might make all the difference to us," the other urged, with a note of warning. "Think it over."

"No use. I can't," came the answer, tensely spoken. "The ground's too good. The man who originally owned this claim—"

The speaker paused as he became conscious of Alva, and she felt a pair of luminous hazel eyes center on her and instantly widen. Even before she could incline her head, he was leaving the other man and coming toward her with undisguised pleasure lighting up his face. Afterward, she remembered that, as this fine figure of a man strode across the rubble of rock, his eyes held hers so strongly as to be all of him that she really saw.

"I hope Magnet looks a little better to you than it did last night," he said, looking down at her with a warming smile, and somehow they were standing together with hands clasped as if they had been old friends. "Now that you're to be here for a while or so, you mustn't be too hard on us."

More than the words alone, the optimism in his face and voice acted on

Alva like a jovial challenge, forcing her to throw off her melancholy. She caught, too, his appreciation that she was different from the others in Magnet. But this was not a matter for elation, for she felt that she was no more than on an equal footing with himself. An impression of the night before was crystallizing into the knowledge that they two were of one kind.

The keen-visaged Eastern engineer, loitering near by, instinctively looked himself over at the sight of a woman and gave a constructive touch to collar and tie. Meanwhile, he furtively admired the large eyes shining out of their dark circles and the momentarily dramatic pose.

"Tragedy," he said to himself, and thought of paintings he had seen. "Tragedy, past or to come, or I've never seen it. Good stuff in *her*, all right. But she's too high tension—needs a 'step-down'—she'll burn herself out here." And then he bowed and walked over, at the other man's nod, to be presented.

"Miss Leigh—Mr. Garcelon, of Boston. All you Easterners really ought to know each other as soon as possible—for protective purposes, I reckon."

"Are we going to let him classify us this way without protest, Miss Leigh?" the appraiser of mines asked quizzically, as he smiled over her hand. "I've been trying hard to be a Westerner for twenty years, and this is my reward—to have my unfortunate choice of a birthplace flung in my face at every turn. Are you foolishly hoping to deceive them, too?"

"Yes, indeed," Alva answered, with an amused gleam in her fine eyes. "I'm a Western woman from to-day forward. But don't let me interrupt. Wasn't somebody buying something?"

"Well—I *was* trying to buy a cemetery for some friends of mine back East," the engineer responded jocularly.

"But Randall, here—confound him!—won't sell out."

Alva felt a change come over the Westerner's manner. He seemed to rebuke the humor in the other's eyes while he made a semiwhimsical reply whose poignancy was not lost, at least, upon the woman.

"Many a mine is a graveyard out here," he said soberly, "but sometimes we're just a little slow about reversing the two." He opened his hand with a slow gesture of pity over the mound across which, Alva realized with a pang, they two had just now crested each other. "These fellows all tried to do something—here in this God-forgotten country—against big odds, I reckon—but they got tired out. Perhaps—perhaps they'd like it if we'd let them sleep."

Alva's eyes filled with tears, and she looked away toward the mountains. But she heard the thoroughly practical Easterner's surprise:

"You don't mean to say you'd let a little thing like a grave—"

"Well—for a while or so, at least," was the answer, and Alva knew that the transaction was ended.

Conscious that their thoughts had taken an unexpected turn, the three began a slow return to the town. Alva felt herself buoyed up by the virility of the two men and a conversation that had suddenly turned humorous. And while she followed the good-natured banter of East against West, she remembered that it might defeat her purposes to seem either nervous or worried. The things *she* had to do would take time. And so she entered into the amusing duel of wits with not a little pleasure, with the result that when she parted from them at the Baker doorstep, the middle-aged Easterner bowed impressively and took his leave in his best manner. He wondered, as he departed, if Magnet would see what he

saw—a place and a woman related one to the other in no conceivable way.

Alva made a faintly delaying gesture as the other of the two was about to leave her.

"I've been wondering a little how you knew I was Miss Leigh," she said curiously. "I didn't know that I'd mentioned my name to any one here. Not that I wouldn't give it"—she smiled, for there must be no mystery—"only, it seemed rather queer."

"Yes." He nodded appreciatively, although he did not meet her eyes. "I understand. And you will be thinking about last night, too. But if you *will* write your name on a tag on your baggage—" His fine white teeth showed pleasantly in a smile over her perplexity, and he made the short open-handed gesture that seemed to do duty for so many words. "Out here ladies' names are easily remembered. But I'll be going—about now," and his luminous eyes shone a temporary farewell. "Remember—I'm counting on you to let me help!"

"A nice man. A *real* nice man," the observant Mrs. Baker remarked, as Alva reentered the house. "He's the biggest man in camp."

"What does he do?" asked Alva, knowing that the time had come when she must learn everything about Magnet that was to be known.

"Dick Randall is hoist engineer for the Cactus Mining Company," replied Mrs. Baker promptly. "They're sinking a double-compartment shaft over in the North Gulch. From what I hear the men say, they'd rather work in the bottom of a shaft with Dick Randall's bucket hanging over them than any other man's in camp. He's a worker, and he don't drink. He's got the judgment, too—that's why he's president of the miners' local here. And these miners wouldn't elect anybody who wasn't right. He has too much power, you see. Whatever Dick Randall says

goes in Magnet—and no mistake about that!"

For a second time that day Alva felt herself singularly fortunate. If she had read aright the frank interest with which the man regarded her, she had made something more than an ordinary friend of the one person who could tell her all that was to be known. She began to feel, too, that he was one whom she might trust unquestioningly.

"Has he *always* been a hoisting engineer?" she asked, with an interest that gave her a twinge.

"How do you mean?" was the puzzled query. "You mean—was he up in the world once—and down now? There ain't any good in those ideas, dearie. A man's a man—or he *ain't*! I guess he's got education enough for any *woman*—if that's what you're looking for. Dollars don't count for much out here, where a bum of a prospector can turn into a millionaire overnight. Randall's got claims enough—and good ones, too."

Alva, on her way back to her room, paused to think of a way to appease the offended Westerner, and then went on, her mind suddenly centering itself on a clear-cut recollection that drew her dark brows into a frown of perplexity.

Her baggage—the shawl strap and suit case—lay open on the floor of her room where she had left them. Around the handle of each she saw a piece of heavy twine and the eyelet of a cardboard tag. It was quite true that she had written her name on the tags, as he had said, but it was also true, now that she remembered it, that she had destroyed the tags when she had left the train two days before.

As she stood there wondering, Mrs. Baker's voice came to her through the open doorway:

"Randall's going to make more money than any of us. He's relocated that cemetery claim that belonged to a young fellow named Jaffray, that got shot. Dick Randall is an *able man*."

CHAPTER IV.

When Alva came to look back on it, the most surprising phase of her establishment in Magnet was the ease of its accomplishment.

Blewitt, the genial optimist in the Town-site office, had promptly leased her "the best corner lot in town—until they struck the sulphides." He had also attempted a series of social calls in the evenings, until Alva had positively disclaimed all intention of buying Magnet real estate for permanent investment; whereupon the town-site man's optimism had waned perceptibly and he had finally exhibited a picture of his wife.

From the lumber yard, gleaming yellow in the gray-green flat below the town, had come a discursive, calculating individual called "Andy," pleasantly redolent of sawdust, whose ever-present foot rule had estimated successfully on a dining room, kitchen, and living tent, with all materials supplied and work done.

A half hour in Palestine with Bindelmann, of the Magnet Mercantile Company, had brought by special freight an efficient six-hole range from somewhere in the outer world four days later.

The water man, whose teams brought Magnet's only supply from the spring at Ash Meadows, forty miles away, had calculated Alva's needs at one barrel every two days, and had said it would be only fourteen dollars—"to a lady" and "no hurry about payment." Alva's interest was evenly divided between the water man's uncanny ability to drive twenty fractious animals with only a jerk line, and the astounding fact that he was making enough money to keep a daughter at the Paris Conservatory.

The firewood difficulty, although apparently insurmountable, had been finally solved by a young Mormon teamster who had come to her rescue after her first collection of odds and ends had

roared up the chimney. The boy, although not yet twenty-one, was pathetically strong in a faith whose strange tenets Alva strove in vain to appreciate, and was soon to be sent by his bishop on a "mission" to far-away Denmark, without the formality of even learning the language. Meanwhile, he drove unmeasured miles across the desert daily, and by his own confession dug Alva's firewood out of the ground with a hoe! Which accomplishment did not diminish her respect for either his superior religious knowledge or his tenacity of purpose.

Shortly after this, a middle-aged person called "Sarah," with stringy, iron-gray locks and a suspicious nose—but who had "stopped drinking now"—had suddenly appeared from nowhere at all and announced that she had come to do the cooking. With this last important asset obtained, and the hiring of two vague-faced waiters from the underworld of hobodom, Alva had found her establishment complete.

"But don't you pay any of 'em one red cent till you get a good stake, Alva," Mrs. Baker had warned innocently, as the two women sat together on a pile of fragrant lumber in the sagebrush and watched the dazzling white canvas of the dining tent being drawn over its framework. "Let 'em take a chance. We all do. Baker's out rustling boarders for you right now. He's got Levy Brothers of the Bon Ton Store promised good and hard, three nice gamblers from the Green Front, and a *very* good-looking man that they *think* robbed the Mohawk Mine in Goldfield, who has lots and lots of money. He was figuring on bagging two Swedes that came in last night, too, but I says, 'No. Swedes eat all the ketchup. Just get white men for Alva. She'll have enough as it is.' And so you will. You'll take in a hundred dollars the very first week and be all clear by the end of the second. You just see if you don't."

The two weeks were over now, and Alva stood in her doorway in the late afternoon wondering how it all had happened. Not only had she twice as many boarders as she needed for appearance's sake, but this remarkable business seemed virtually to run itself, or else there was some wonderful stimulant in the wine-sweet air that made her act and think without an effort. But presently it came to her, since pride in her success as a boarding-house keeper had no particular place in her underlying intention, that *she* had not done any of it at all, but that those who knew had come and, with clear-sighted, efficient honesty, done it all for her.

The afternoon sun softened and colored the bright ranges with slanting wine-purple shadows. The panorama of flaming buttes and valleys and wide deserts turned into a vast, soft fairyland, where unfamiliar peaks swam into view a hundred miles away through the haze, glimmered for a time, and then, suddenly, were gone, and dry lakes shimmered and lured and in their turn faded slowly from sight.

Alva's bosom swelled with a full inhalation of the sweet, keen air, while her limbs quivered with a moment's flashing joy in mere living. With clear, strong, newly brightened eyes, she searched her view hungrily for the fanciful mysteries her imaginative nature loved to create among those distant, blue-hazed hills, exalted by the mere sense of illimitable distance. She wondered how people could do wrong in so wonderful a land. How could men be wicked where the world was so wide and so silent and where a human being was so very small? As for herself, it was like a great temple where she could worship silently, with the ever-whirring wind for a resonant-voiced chorister beneath a blue-vaulted roof that arched up from gleaming colonnades of hills.

The sun sank lower. The castled peaks marched forward in the reddened

ing light, stood still, then dwindled away. The sky was a turquoise dome behind a bank of golden-crested buttes.

"It's the outer gate of heaven," she whispered to herself. "It brings me close to God."

Then her eyes strayed north to the cañon where Magnet's basin, narrowing, ran down to Furnace Creek and Death Valley. With its last slant the sun streamed through a split in the darkened western hills and smote the red porphyry cliffs of the gorge with a blaze of fiery light. Alva shuddered. Seamed like a drunkard's cheek and pitted as if with disease, the flaring cliffs that led down to the shunned place below seemed like a row of hideous warders at the gate of hell.

She turned her eyes away with a tremor of fear. The contrast between the frightful gorge and her beautiful, wide vista of a moment ago was to her the contrast between life and death, or between purity and sin. She felt as if she had been sitting alone at night by her window and an evil, frightfully scarred face had suddenly leered in on her. Her exaltation left her abruptly, although her sense of imagery remained. She began to see this town of Magnet as she had seen her two views—a place of vivid contrasts, of horrors and beauties, of boundless generosity and hot-blooded crime, of abrupt changes from right living to wrong living, where strong men grew stronger and weak men weaker, and, above all, where he who would live happily must keep himself quite sane and pure of heart.

But among all these things Alva could see no danger for herself. She knew her nature and her purpose to be sufficiently sane. There was no danger that she would obtain a jot more than was her due. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Some one man to pay with his life for Donald's. And she would find him—if not in Magnet, then else-

where. Meanwhile, she thanked God that the righteousness of her purpose would keep her sane.

All things considered, she felt that she had been very successful since she had come to Magnet. Only two weeks had passed and she already knew the name of every man who had been in the camp in February and who might know how Donald had met his end. Three men, in particular, she felt might have something to tell her. One of these was a sharp-faced young miner named Duncan, who seemed in some uncanny way to read her thoughts whenever she spoke to him. Without having mentioned Donald's name to him, she felt, nevertheless, that he had divined the reason for her presence in the camp, and until she could test him to her own satisfaction, she was wary of trying for the knowledge that he often seemed on the point of imparting.

Another of the three was a product of the saloons—Danny the Bum—half-witted, bleary-eyed, unshaven, unbelievably dirty and forlorn, whose mental fumbblings produced a strange mixture of useless fact and fancy concerning Donald, which always began and ended with a vivid recital of his generosity. But just what form this trait had taken Alva could never ascertain. Try as she would, she could extract nothing further from the ill-starred but cautious Danny than that Donald, true to his nature, had been reckless with his nights.

The third of her possibilities was Richard Randall.

Alva wondered how the man had come to acquire Donald's claim. She knew enough about such things now to see the great value of the ground, and yet the transfer of this particular property was decidedly vague. But because she must have a clew, she must disregard nothing, and she soon decided again, as she had decided many times before, to ask him about it. At first this seemed an easy thing to do, for she had

never forgotten the sudden glimpse of his nature that the man had given her when the sale of his property had seemingly hung in the balance. She even liked to repeat what he had said: "Perhaps they'd like it if we'd let them sleep."

But after all, was that everything that he had said? Hadn't he also said: "I have another purpose for this ground?" When she coupled this sentence with the sudden disbelief that he would refuse a good price simply because of a few graves, she began to feel disturbed. Poetical ideas, she knew, had scant circulation in Magnet. She began to suspect that she had invested her Samaritan with altogether too much of the romantic. And so, once started on this moody road, she proceeded to go farther, and in due time had stripped him mercilessly of one charitable motive after another, until the ugly question again came up as to how he had known her name on that first day.

Right there she decided finally and absolutely, as she had already decided a corresponding number of times the other way, to ask him nothing. While there might be a multitude of ways in which he could have learned it, yet the damning fact remained that he had lied about it, and the restraint that sprang from this was sufficient to keep them apart on the subject. Yes, and if she could manage it, on other subjects, too.

But there were still other things that puzzled her, and she went into her kitchen, where the gray-haired old woman sat on the doorstep peeling potatoes.

"Sarah," said Alva pleasantly, "tell me who sent you here to work for me."

"Dick Randall, of course," Sarah answered promptly. "He made me cut out the booze, too," she added cheerily. "Sarah," says he, 'your pretty daughter, Rosie, in Bullfrog,' was a-askin' fer you, Sarah—and I told her she had a good old ma who'd be back home soon

with a big stake to help make clothes for the baby.' And say! You oughter see me give them saloon men the laugh then! Babies always *did* beat whisky, anyhow."

"Sarah," said Alva again, after a thoughtful moment, "don't you think that fifteen dollars a month is very little to pay for leasing this lot from the Town-site Company?"

"*Town-site!*" echoed Sarah, in genuine amazement. "Why, this lot ain't the Town-site's! Whoever told you that? This lot belongs to Dick Randall! Fifteen dollars a month! I should say that *was* cheap!"

"I thought so, too," said Alva quickly. "Please say nothing about it."

There seemed to be little need to probe farther into the ease of her establishment in Magnet. Even the question as to why the water man sold her on time instead of for cash was fully answered. A faint color rose in Alva's creamy cheek. Then her attention was called to a woman who was idly looking in at the door, with a curious, ruminating expression on her face.

This woman, whom Alva had never seen before, was both tall and conspicuously well figured. Her face was strong rather than weak, although the generous mouth was cynically curled at the corners, and her large, washed-out blue eyes seemed to hold a mingling of yearning and resentment as they appreciated the well-kept interior. Her head, uncovered, was a mass of blowsy, not unattractive red hair. She seemed to be still in her twenties.

As the woman's eyes rose to hers with languid insolence, Alva felt every muscle in her body tighten.

"Hullo," said the woman, regarding her with interest. "I was just passing by. Thought I'd look in."

Alva knew what was meant. "I have heard about you and I'm here to see what you are," was what the red-haired

woman might as well have said. Alva inclined her head and felt that she was being looked over. Presently it seemed as if there was something more than decent curiosity in the woman's face. Alva blazed with anger. Her eyes grew larger and her eyebrows level, as was their way. Her face flushed in spite of herself.

"Well—you're surely a good-looking woman," the other said bluntly, and the bold eyes wavered as if she felt the contrast between Alva's satiny skin and her own coarsely marked, though still handsome, face. "I guess you're a good woman, too. It's handy to know who is and who isn't in this hell hole," and she laughed unmirthfully. "Well—so long. Most likely you want to work. Wish you luck. Be sure you make the d—d rats pay their way." And with this venomous advice she turned away, picking a path between the bushes and heaps of glittering bottles toward the lower purlieus of the town.

Alva dropped a sidelong glance and saw old Sarah staring after the stranger with her lips parted in a snarl.

"And to think that she spoke up to the likes of *you*!" the old woman gritted savagely. "I'd like to tear her eyes out! But it'll wait, I guess. She'll get hers—some day. Old Mister Barleycorn will ketch her soon. Those piano-playing, singing women get nutty streaks on the men the same as you and me, and when they can't get the one they want, they go to drinking. It's the talk round town that this one—'Tiger Lil'—is gone clean daffy about Dick— Oh, my! There you've gone and shook your tea canister all over my nice, clean floor! Well, never you mind one bit, Miss Alva. You let me sweep it up."

CHAPTER V.

May had come and gone, taking with it what few sweet odors of spring had struggled unequally for life in the val-

ley, and brazen summer refracted hotly from the hills and blazed down from every flaming butte.

All through the long day the mountains had been gauzy with a haze of heat, and as Alva came homeward from Mrs. Baker's in the early evening, the star-shot night was still, even of the ever-whirling wind.

From where she walked in the safe center of the street, she could see Magnet, with its lamps lighted, leap feverishly into its course as a roaring, flaring "boom" camp. All around her in the warm darkness were voices and laughter, carried through the thin, still air as over water—a sense of constant movement—a ceaseless ripple of pianos—grotesque shadows passing and repassing on the walls of the glowworm tents—the whir and clatter of the roulette ball in the shouting saloons.

Spring and "the ore" had brought prosperity to town. Automobiles without number, from the older camps of Tonopah, Goldfield, Manhattan, and Rhyolite, stood in front of the stores, their engines throbbing, their headlights cutting long paths down the dark street. An odor of good cigars was abroad. Eastern voices talked incisively of "options," "groups," and "sulphides." Stout, ruddy-faced men with well-trimmed white mustaches were pointed out to unshaven ones in prospecting boots; whereupon the boots sauntered with well-feigned casualness in the direction indicated. Now and then a roisterer on the outskirts emptied his revolver at the stars.

Magnet was "on the boom," and Magnet, rioting along with all the arrogance of new-made fortunes, was well aware of it; wherefore the night must be a time for fun too long postponed. And so, through all the action and full-blooded life of the moment, a sense of jocularity was everywhere round about, and heard above it all by each eager

ear was the whirl of the wings of Chance.

Unmolested in her quiet passage of the street, Alva paused in her doorway and looked back. Never before had she felt so completely outside of all these people's lives. Something perilously like bitterness rose to her lips at the contrast between her purpose and the frankly pursued ends of those around her. She suddenly longed to be at one with Magnet, for all its fantastic promises and lurid ambitions. At least, its ideals were healthy, even if their probable attainment might be questioned.

She raised her arms above her head with a thrill of yearning for action and a part in the bright game, if only as an outlet for her abounding vitality. The chrysalis was breaking at last. Never a day came in this wide land but the sun shone mightily and the wind blew. And as it streamed to her through the fingers of the hazy peaks, keen and dry and tangled with the scent of far-off worlds, it seemed searching out the lifeless things of memory to blow them away with the dried leaves of yesterday.

She thought of Natalie, who was now in Italy—Mr. Bagby had forwarded her last letter from Ravenna—and she wondered what the Warrens, especially the easy-going, matter-of-fact Jim, who always let things "work themselves out," would say if they knew the strange life she was leading to-day. She had told only a very few people that she was going to California when she had left New York, and only Nannie Ferguson and Mr. Bagby had her post-office address, so that at the most her old circle would think she was at Pasadena or San Diego. People were asking about her, however, for the fact of her inheritance had been paragraphed in a society journal of which she had a copy, and her name had already been linked tentatively with several men of her old set who were indubitably in need of money.

The article itself was only a hint of the sumptuous life in the East that she was confidently expected to enter upon without delay, but it sufficed to bring it all vividly to mind, and she began to wonder a little at her lack of desire for those luxuries which her wealth and position could now give. She realized that, a few years before, if she had not been in love with Donald, she would almost unquestionably have accepted that life and its men as representing all she mundanely desired; but when she considered it all to-day, she felt that, while she would frankly welcome the feminine side of that soft existence, she would probably find the masculine part of it strangely dissatisfying.

At first she very naturally laid this at the door of her age, for she was now nearly thirty, but gradually it was borne in on her that Magnet had awakened her to a new and truer conception of life, and that her unconscious demand for fiber in the masculine was the result of the desert's teaching. Putting aside for a moment the sad tangle of ideas so persistently connecting Richard Randall and Donald, she delighted in imagining circumstances under which such women as Natalie and Sally Lowe might meet her tall Samaritan. She fancifully placed the desert man in situations where only inherent grace of mind could preserve him from feminine damnation, and smiled to see him emerge from the ordeal faintly amused and wholly unscarred. And again she saw his quiet eyes, with their promise of reserve power, resting calmly on some very able, keen-sensed gentlemen she knew, only to feel a glow of confidence in his thorough understanding of men, whoever they might be. It was undeniable, of course, that the man's source and his unfamiliarity with the lighter things that would always be part of her woman's life were definite quantities, but these had not been included in Alva's estimate for some time past. Life

in Magnet had shown her the greater value of certain infrequent fundamentals.

But she was very lonely to-night, and her thoughts eventually turned on herself and the ever-present problem. She began to speculate again as to the matter of Donald's claim. Although he had never alluded to it at length in his letters, except to speak of its great value, the thought came to her that she might find a clew somewhere in the packet hidden away among the few possessions she had brought, and on her way through the dining tent she paused to light a lamp, so that she could bring the letters there to read. When she returned, a familiar figure was standing, hat in hand, in the doorway. Without knowing why, she hid the letters in her dress.

"Magnet might be called a little noisy to-night," he said, as he came forward at her welcoming smile to where they had sat many times before with her oil-clothed table between them. "A lot of claims have changed hands lately. Some of the boys are cutting up. I hope no one is bothering you."

"No. You're the first to-night," and her touch of fun found a reflection in his own swift smile. "If you stay too late, I'll notify 'the committee.' But how does a man get a claim, in the first place?" she added carelessly. "You were going to tell me all about it the other evening and something interrupted."

She moved the lamp to one side and seemed to have trouble with the wick. Meanwhile, womanlike, she managed a complete appraisal of his appearance. She found him cleanly shaven as always, simply dressed, well poised, and with a steady, friendly light in his luminous eyes. A recollection of the woman at the kitchen doorway came into her mind, but was as quickly put away.

"He finds a ledge—and locates it," he answered. "That means building a

discovery monument on the outcrop and putting other monuments at the corners of the claim. His development work must be done inside of three months from that date. Then the ground is his for a year from the following January. After that he has to do regular assessment work each year in order to keep his title."

"It seems very simple," Alva remarked. "Why is it that they so often have trouble?"

"Sometimes men think that others have committed illegal acts in locating," was the response. "Location depends on a man's word. Generally it's respected. But there are some who take advantage of that fact. Nearly always they get caught. I have met one or two like that."

"Did you have trouble?"

"It could be called that," he admitted evasively. "But trouble always depends on the *men*." His eyes strayed away. He seemed about to speak of something else.

But there was something yet for Alva to know. She turned again to her friend, the lampwick, and moved it up and down. Meanwhile, she asked her question:

"What happens to a man's claim if he—if he goes away—and doesn't come back—that is, in time to do his location work?"

The hand on the table before her beat a faint tattoo before the man answered: "In that case it reverts to the government and can be relocated."

"When?" asked Alva sharply.

"At the end of the ninety days," he smiled.

"But might not others relocate it before then—if they were very anxious for it and knew that the man might never come back?"

"It would be wrong," he said evenly. "No one would uphold them in it."

Alva was puzzled. Could it be that

Donald had not done even the first simple work necessary to holding a claim? Yet how could the man across the table have secured it in any other way?

"Generally a man does his location work as soon as he finds his ledge, but, of course, there are exceptions to all rules," he said, in a curiously level voice. Then he raised his eyes to hers with an amused smile. "Why not locate a claim for yourself and see how it's done? There's some good ground not yet taken up along the cliff that looks down into the valley. I've been thinking"—and his strong, quiet eyes looked hopefully into hers—"that perhaps we might walk out that way to-morrow afternoon. You'll not find many things like the valley back East. It's only a mile from here. Is that too far?" he asked, with some concern.

"Too far?" cried Alva, laughing at the ridiculous challenge. "Do you think, sir, I must *always* have your horse to ride?"

With this answer he apparently considered the object of his visit accomplished, for he rose and held out his hand.

"You *could* have him," he said, with a curious little nod. "He hasn't seemed quite the same ever since that first night. I declare, I just don't *know* what's got into him lately. It must be loco weed. He won't have anything to do with the other horses in the corral nowadays. He seems all stuck up!"

"And so you want to give him away—to me!"

"If you like his gait. You must look him over first. But I'll be here to-morrow when I come off shift." He lifted his hat and was out of sight almost at once in the darkness.

"What a silly thing to say about a horse!" Alva murmured. And then, as she stood in her doorway trying to recognize a disappearing figure as his, she felt the blood steal warmly into her

cheek. She knew that he had not been speaking of his horse.

Her hand brushed against the packet of letters in her skirt and she clutched them with all her strength. There must be nothing of *that* kind—unless—unless it were she who brought it about for her own purposes. Her brow darkened. By what curious process had this man obtained title to Donald's claim? By what right, legal or moral, had he assumed possession of this precious property that was still lawfully Donald's—aye—and hers, too.

"Good evening, Miss Leigh," said a voice beside her. Duncan, the young miner from the Cactus shaft, stepped into the beam of light and bowed in his rather pleasant way. "Seeing you were having callers, I figured I'd step over."

Once more Alva saw the look in the young man's eyes that seemed to show an insight into her affairs. At other times this had been disturbing, but to-night she decided to make use of his knowledge. Yet she did not ask him in, but showed him, instead, a seat beside her on the doorstep, where the light shining from behind kept her face in the shadow.

"Every one here seems to be making money nowadays," she said. "Are you selling claims, too?"

"I only wish I was," came the immediate answer and an equally quick look that was not hard for her to interpret. "There are reasons why I'd like to get my hooks on a few thousands right now. But I've got no claims. Got done out of 'em," he added bitterly. "There was a lot of midnight locating done here a while back, as you may know. But I'll get square, some day."

"You know who did it, of course," said Alva. "If you were in the right, why couldn't you make them give it up?"

"I guess you don't rightly under-

stand, Miss Leigh," Duncan answered sourly. "In all these places there's *rings*. If a poor man doesn't get into the ring at the start, he stands no show. When there's two or three big men and mebbe some guns to back up a jumper when he knocks over your monument, what are you going to do? Suppose, now, that I come into this yere camp when it's only a pup, and I see a likely-looking fraction stuck away somewhere in a good group. Suppose them owners are the men that run the camp—not mine operators, you 'understand, but miners, these yere presidents and secretaries and officers of the federation. What chance have I got against *them*? Do you reckon I kin hold that ground if it isn't recorded and surveyed? No, ma'am! Not in a thousand years! They ain't yere for their health, you bet! A little bit of a mistake in a date or a description is good enough for them. Over she goes! Kick down the monument! Tear up the notice! Pull out the guns! *Then* where are you?"

Alva sat still, listening intently to every word. If she had not been so completely absorbed in fitting the puzzle together with the aid of this new evidence, she might have felt the man's mind working on hers with an almost uncanny perceptiveness.

"I'll show you what I mean," he said, with a ring of sincerity in his voice. "Then you'll know more about some of these fellows. 'Way last fall, a man comes into this yere camp. I ain't saying how old he was, or his name. I ain't the kind that looks for trouble. But, anyway, he was in the first rush, and he took up a lot of claims. Some were here and some were there, and one was a fraction on the best piece of out-crop in camp. Now, if all those claims had been in the same group, he could have done enough work on one of them to hold the whole lot. But they were scattered. He had to pick away, first on one and then on another.

"Now, while he was doing his holding work one week on a 'way-off claim; a man who owned all around this fraction looked over the young fellow's paper and saw that the young fellow had located the same day *he* did. So what does this man do? He changes his own date to *one day earlier*, and then he pivots his claims on his discovery monuments so as to cover up the fraction. And he puts up his permanent corners and side centers, and gets it surveyed and recorded. And he crowds that young fellow out and says there ain't *no* fraction, and never *was*.

"Now, what can the boy do? There's a local to appeal to—yes—but the other man's high up in it. In fact, he's about at the top. Mebbe you'd call him at the top. Yes. Let it go that way. And so the boy gets laughed at and he feels mean. But he has good stuff in him. He's a fighter. He won't let any one beat him on a little technicality, and he won't quit. Only, he makes one mistake."

"What was that?" asked Alva sharply.

"Why—er—he goes to packing a gun. Now, that's foolish. I carry one myself, sometimes—but I don't make threats. So they know he's got the gun, and that he's picking up evidence against them. Things begin to look bad. They have to make a move. So this is what they do: They send a man out after that young fellow, and they get him to drinking, and they put knock-out drops in his glass. And then another Mr. Friend, who's all ready near by, gets him out into the brush—to get over it—and leaves him there. In the morning, what do they find? They find that poor, innocent, hard-working, nice young fellow, that never hurt anybody or anything, lying there with no money in his pockets—*shot with his own gun!*"

Duncan halted abruptly, almost dramatically. Then he laughed. "But

that's the way it goes. *Simple*, ain't it?"

"*Very simple*," Alva answered dully. "What did they do about it?"

"*Do!* With Mr. Date Changer sitting in the local office all night long with his pals so as to furnish an alibi? What *could* they do? They buried the poor, innocent young fellow—that's all. I—er—I helped 'em do it.

"I tell you what, Miss Leigh," the man continued venomously. "You don't know—you never *could* know—the kinds of men there is in this camp. Goody-goody-looking men that are so crooked they couldn't sleep in a roundhouse. Men that look you straight between the eyes and make you think they're sending money home to their mothers, when all the time they're figuring out some way to do you up and make it look as if—as if the desert beat you!"

As if the desert had beaten him! A month ago the phrase would have been meaningless, but to-night she knew to the uttermost what it meant. Alva had felt for some time that the very lack of a clew pointed to brains in the crime's engineering. Now the light was beginning to break.

"But I don't like to talk," the man continued shrewdly. "I don't ever say much. I might get misunderstood. Danny the Bum, *he* knows. He's up all night, knocking round. As for me—I've got to sleep, so's I kin make my wages. And I've got a good stake saved up, too. It won't be long now before I pull out for Idyho. *That's* the country you ought to see, Miss Leigh. All hills and woods and green valleys high up, with grass and streams a-running everywhere. That's the place fer a young couple like you and me to live. Mebbe you'd like to—"

"I'm very tired to-night, Mr. Duncan," Alva interrupted. "If you don't mind, I'll say good night. Perhaps—if you happen to see Danny to-morrow

—you might tell him that I've some work he can do."

Chagrined by his abrupt dismissal, the man stood by in silence while she passed in and closed the door.

For a time he stood there in the darkness, meditating, and then moved away, passing silently between the tents to the virginal greasewood behind them, where a path led him to an isolated tent house near the vague bulk of the lumber yard.

There was a light in the house, shining out of the open door, and on the doorstep sat a woman with red hair and a white dress. As the man came into the light, she recognized him and spoke; whereupon he stepped out of the light again and seated himself near by.

"I've just come from there, Lil," he said, as if he knew why she was sitting there alone, thinking. "And you can bet on it—you've got no show."

An angry exclamation leaped to the woman's lips at the brutality, but she choked it off and laughed.

"Neither have you," she retorted. "We're two of a kind, you and I, and we're certainly beautes."

"I can't see it," he objected. "I'd be all right for her, I reckon, if I had a stake. You can marry *any* woman if you have enough money, and you don't need much to start with if you're a good liar. How about a couple of ten-spots, Lillian? Can you spare it? I'm cut right off at the pockets to-night—just when I've spotted a brace of Easterners that I could work into a little game of stud. Come through, and help a fellow out."

The woman narrowed her eyes. "What do you know?" she asked, as if she would bargain a while.

"I know this much," he answered: "Either she thinks Randall shot young Jaffray for his claim, or else I'm the worst-fooled man in ten counties. And you can bet I piled it on."

"You did?" the woman murmured thoughtfully. "Did you mention names?"

"Not me. It's better not. But it hit her hard—and stuck. I saw through her little game a month or more ago. I wonder what she thinks she can do."

"Sometimes those women can do a good deal," was the sober answer. "Even when there's very little evidence. People believe them, you see."

He looked at her sideways for a moment, meditating some new viciousness.

"Would you have him just the same, if it *was* true?" he asked.

The red-haired woman made a disgusted movement that showed her fiery temper, and had to grip her hands together to keep from striking him. Her throat filled up and choked her utterance.

"I'd take Dick Randall quick as a wink if he'd shot the whole lot of you for your claims," she said thickly. "He's more than you'll ever be. *He's a man!*"

"Then you'll have your chance," was the acid reply. "He did it—and there isn't a man in camp that knows it but me. I've got him any time I want him."

For a moment the woman said nothing, but only stared into the darkness, where she had heard footsteps. Then, as she felt him dangerously near her, she sprang to her feet.

"None of that!" she cried, as she tried to reach the house. "Don't think you can hold *me* up! Oh, I guess I know who's doing the strong-arm work around here now, and I guess I know who shot Don Jaffray, too. There'll be more that know it by to-morrow. And don't you try to tell me anything about Dick Randall. If you had anything on him, you'd have bled him to death months ago, or *you'd* be dead. *Let me in that door!*"

For answer, the man only advanced on her silently, driving her ahead of

him into the greasewood and away from the house. In his hand he held a glittering object gripped like a club.

"Give me that money," he said, in a low voice, and glanced over his shoulder at an indistinct figure that seemed to be approaching. "Tell them, if you want—and spoil your own game. I didn't think you were such a fool."

The red-haired woman stood still for a moment as if she saw the truth of his remark, and then suddenly laughed in his face.

"Why, here's Dick, now—right behind you," she cried, in a strident voice that rang out across the open spaces to at least one of the tents on Main Street.

With an oath, Duncan whirled about and saw—Danny the Bum. The woman laughed mockingly and slipped by into the house.

Snarling with rage, Duncan drew back his fist and planted it squarely in the gray-bearded, vacuous face.

A few yards away and the miner turned, as if struck by a sudden thought, and looked back. The woman had left the protecting doorway, and was helping a staggering form into the house.

"That was a fool trick," Duncan muttered. "That old dope can make a lot of trouble for me. Well—I guess I'll play the game through to-night—then quit. My luck's played out."

Halfway up the main street, where a crossroad came in from the Magnet Consolidated's shaft a mile away, two large acetylene lights emblazoned the dubious name "Red Onion" on a high-fronted, frame saloon. Here Duncan circulated slowly through the pay-night crowds, and carefully spoke to all the men he knew. One or two offered him drinks, but he shook his head. He wasn't feeling just right, he said, to all those who could hear him, and was going home to bed. Another circuitous voyage through the smoke-hazed bedlam, and he noticed with satisfaction

that comparatively few of the Consolidated's men had come over the dark trail from their isolated workings. Behind the bar a nicked clock told him that it was only eight-thirty. His thin lips came together in a line as he made his grim calculations. If he hurried a little, he could get to the point of rocks on the Consolidated's trail at just about the right time.

With a cautious glance around to see if he were noticed, he stepped quickly out of the back door of the saloon, and struck out through the brush at a rapid walk. But as he went, a shambling figure, which had been wandering around in the darkness outside the saloon, recognized him, and saw where he was going. Presently, after some obvious skull gropings, it decided to follow.

It was about this same time of the evening that a boy came and stood on a chair in the Miners' Hall across from the Red Onion, and lighted a flaring kerosene lamp which dangled from a cross beam. This done, he lingered on the steps until a dozen grave-faced men arrived and shut the door on their deliberations, which were on certain crimes that were being committed in the camp and the line of action to be taken.

And it was about this same time, also, that a woman took a pen and laboriously printed a few lines on a sheet of pink note paper, whose envelope she took pains to address in the same cautious way.

And yet another woman, alone in her tent, sat among a handful of letters strewn across her bed, alternately puzzling over a man's name which had rung out just now on the clear night air, and repeating certain phrases over and over again under her breath:

"Found shot." "With his own gun."
"As if the desert had beaten him."

Only an *able* man would have thought of that.

CHAPTER VI.

When old Sarah called to her a little after four the next afternoon, Alva turned away from the tiny mirror, swaying against the frame of her tent with a greater certainty of herself and what she purposed to do than had been hers at any time since she had come to Magnet. She knew perfectly well that she could never hope to trap a man like Richard Randall into damaging confessions, but her instinct told her that to-day he was ready to be led into a disclosure of his true character, whatever that might prove to be.

And so it was a bright-faced, apparently interested woman who strode untiringly with him up the sage-sweet slopes behind the town, and entered into his mood with a careful sympathy that started a warm flow of words.

"I've wanted you to see the valley many a time since you came," he said, and immediately the strong appeal of his tones was upon her, in spite of her determination not to feel it. "To me, this is the solemnest place in all the world—because it's so silent." They had nearly reached the summit of the Funerals, and already a ribbon line of snow, miles away through the thin air, had come into view on the other side of a great gap that was yet unseen. "Even if a fellow could *concentrate* silences the same as you concentrate sulphides on a Wilfley table, I reckon these Death Valley silences would still out-run your product about a thousand ounces to the ton."

Then they gained the summit of the range, and Alva put out her hand to stay his words. She saw now why he had called it "solemn," and she saw the reason for its name, for the presage of death lay in every stark detail.

Beneath their feet a great cliff of burned sienna fell, sheer, a thousand feet. Below this, bright terraces of hillocks tumbled down for a thousand

more into rocky gorges and gray beds of sand, which wound, snakelike, between hills, snow-white and orange and blood-red, down to a yellow, heat-hazed plain. Scorified like the crimson hulk of a dead crater, the ghastly gorges and hummocks cut and rolled their way north and south until they faded into vague blurs of color in the smoky distance. Directly across the great gap, the bleak front of the Panamints, capped with snow, rose like a sinister prison wall. And always between them lay that glittering, twinkling, white-powdered, yellow plain—lifeless, hot, and still—attracting with the fascination of unfathomed peril, and yet as repelling as a skull grinning through a shroud.

The woman groped behind her and sank down on a jutting table of rock. It all seemed a perfectly fitting climax to the premonitory wastes behind them. Just as there are parts of this earth that promise life and happiness at first sight, so this place, too, had its declaration, but the silent warning that came up to her from the great sink below was that of death and despair. Nothing could palliate its sterility—nothing in all that riot of color north and south or in the bleak, stony west held out the faintest hope of a habitable region beyond. Hemmed in by the two great mountain chains, the hideous basin, with its gleaming floor, seemed like a great smelting pot beneath whose treacherous golden dross a hell of molten metal bubbled, yet seemed still.

And over it all was the constant sense of heat—overpowering and unescapable—refracting upon her from every angle of the hot rocks, shooting up from the still hotter gorges and burned hillocks, reflecting from the glittering miles of salt and borax spread out illimitably below. Even on the high edge of the cliff, the air felt dry and lifeless. What must it be down there where the yellow surface rocked with gentle undulations as

the bluish gauze of the heat waves swam up and down?

Alva turned a strained look on the man beside her. She felt frightened.

He smiled understandingly, and nodded.

"It's pretty bad," he said. "Next month it will be the worst of all. Even now it would be hard work to stay alive down there very long—where even flies can't live. But men have had to do it. Some Mormons tried it a good many years ago, and they had a hard time. They'd sold out their Utah ranches and were traveling west over the old California trail, and the party split here in the Funerals through a disagreement over an Indian guide who knew about the valley, and wouldn't tackle it.

"So half of them went down the Amargosa Valley, and on through the Soda Lake sink country, which is nearly as bad, and so on through to what is now Los Angeles.

"The other half of the party cut across the desert behind us to this place, crossing a few miles down there to the north. When they reached the other side, they found they couldn't get up through the Panamints, and they had to stop."

He pointed across the sink, with its winding rivers of salt mush and borax, to where a small clump of willows and mesquite dotted a fanlike arroyo bed at the foot of the western wall. "Do you see that tiny green spot? That's a spring they opened up, just by luck. Nowadays men call it 'Bennett's Wells.' It was the only thing that saved them.

"There they rested for a while, and counted noses. Some had dropped behind—for keeps. Then they tried to get out, going north—all along that western side—hunting for a gulch where they could get their wagons up. But they didn't find it. And always some fellow got enough of it after a while, and dropped where he stood.

Because, you see—it isn't lack of water in the canteen that makes the trouble so much as it is the lack of water in the air. Up here, there's forty or fifty per cent, we'll say—down there, there's only ten, or maybe *five*. It isn't thirst that kills in Death Valley. It's letting your head get too hot.

"Well—then—they came back—back to Bennett's Wells, and after they'd rested, they began to figure on the south. They were an uncomplaining lot, those old Mormons, and pretty grim. Down south they did better, but their animals were getting weak, and it wouldn't do for them to pull a pound more than was absolutely necessary. So they figured that they'd better leave all their money behind—buried somewhere—two hundred thousand dollars in gold. And three picked men went out and buried it over there on the slope south of the Wells. Then they went on. There had been about forty of them at first. Now there were a lot less.

"But it was hard work to get along, and when, just by luck, they stumbled on a spring, they were pretty thirsty. Now this spring had poisoned water—they called it 'Bitter Spring.' All of that party except three—all but three of those men who had left the original party here in the Funerals—curled up and died alongside of that spring, including the three that had buried the treasure. Three out of the lot escaped, and they left there in a hurry—on foot, because all the animals were dead, too.

"Now, here is the point of the story: While those three men were climbing up the Panamints, trying to get out, they came across an outcrop of silver ore—native silver—with the values sticking out in wires and knobs. In fact, it was so easy to knock the silver out of the rock that they pounded some out and made new sights for their rifles. And they called it the 'Gun Sight Mine,' and went on. A long time afterward they turned up at the old Newhall Ranch

over there in the San Fernando Valley, and were saved. When they told their story, they started a search for the Gun Sight Mine that's been going on for more than *fifty years!*"

"And it has never been found?"

"Not yet." He smiled. "But we have hopes. I have a man over there right now, looking around. Perhaps he'll find it and send me word—perhaps he won't. But if *he* did send me word —" He paused and Alva saw his pleasant lips tighten ever so little and his fine eyes contract.

"You would go across—even now?" she ventured, with a swift look at the yellow sink below.

"Even now," he answered. "It can be done. And it would *have* to be done," he added, a trifle grimly. "News of the finding of the Gun Sight would bring a hundred men there overnight. I would go by the causeway over the borax' marsh at Furnace Creek up there to the north—then south by Bennett's Wells."

"But the *water!*" she cried, almost frantically. "Where would you get it?"

"I could make the Wells on two canteens," was his reply.

He stretched himself at her feet, his back against the ledge of rock, his felt hat in his lap, and his eyes, thoughtful and steady, fixed on the darkening mountain chain from among whose snow-tipped peaks some day might come a message. There was no denying the certainty with which he estimated his ability, but the sense was equally strong that he was right—that he *could* reach the Wells on two canteens.

Alva shifted her position so as to study his face. Whatever grim means he might use to accomplish his purposes, the man's general aims in life were unquestionably sane. For the first time since she had known him, she began to understand his ambitions, even though it was quite possible that they had forever ended her own. She saw,

for one thing, just why he was satisfied to stay in Magnet and work as a laborer. Back in the East, men in like pursuits stayed in the rut because timidity or misfortune closed their eyes to their chances, but here was a man who, while he worked, was in constant activity, keeping prospectors in the field, sending his earnings to recently discovered camps, continually testing, digging, exploring, unceasingly yet silently pursuing the end that he knew he would, in time, accomplish.

And so, in spite of the gall-like bitterness of her suspicions, her honesty compelled her to acknowledge his grip on the possibilities contained in himself and in this wide Western world in which he lived. He had begun to typify that larger life that she was coming to know. And this life, which had seemed at first an existence devoted merely to taking reckless chances was, in reality, she was beginning to see, a never-ceasing search for the success that could be found somewhere in these hot hills because, of a certainty, it lay there waiting to be found.

Little by little Alva's mind wandered away from her main purpose. He had begun to talk, quietly and very simply, and, as far as she could detect, without a trace of anything but sober honesty in his tones. Alva's intended study changed into silent absorption.

"It's always *there*—if you'll only look far enough and long enough," he said, unconsciously following her thoughts. "That's the thing that has kept me going. The way to find a mine is to look for it—and the way to keep it good after you've found it is to keep on looking. And I shall be always looking.

"But I have been at it quite a while," he added thoughtfully, smiling up at her as if still on good terms with chance. "I started mining when I was twelve years old, nipping tools over in Grass Valley, and I've been prospecting and mining ever since. Naturally, I haven't

been able to bother a college much during that time. Would that spoil a man for you?"

"No," said Alva understandingly.

He nodded. "I've met some who would figure on it a whole lot, but not *you*, I reckon. As a matter of fact, I've been to a good many schools and colleges in my life, but they were not like those you'd know about. They've been in Nevada and in California, and, for a while, one was in Arizona. You see—I had to start out young. I'm only thirty or so now, but I've had to do everything on a ranch that there was to do in order to keep going, and nearly everything around a mine. My father and my brother had a quick ending down in Arizona, and I was left with some debts to pay."

"You mean—they died in an accident?"

"Well—hardly that, ma'am. It was Mexicans that did it. You see—we were always what might be called a mining family. If there was a rush anywhere near by, one of us would always go. And so, little by little, my brother got down into Arizona and found a ledge and sent for my father and me.

"But this ledge was near the 'line,' and the fellows over the border were pretty 'bravo.' When they heard we had a good claim, they came over, and tried to take it away from my father and my brother. It was then that they were killed. I hadn't yet come down from California. But when I heard about it, I lost no time. There were seven Mexicans that did it. I was just turned eighteen when—they were killed."

Alva's lips parted suddenly, but she finally let her question go unasked: When *who* were killed?

"After that I knocked around a good deal—punching and mining and milling—back and forth and crosswise. But, somehow, I was always trying to pick up something as I went along, be-

cause I knew that if I made a big stake, I'd want an education mighty bad. And so I studied books when I could, and I listened to people who *knew*, and now I've got so that I'm not afraid to talk with most men. That is to say—I've sometimes got a little information or something that they don't know about—when they happen to get around to it."

He paused and looked up at her with an amused smile. "Do you see, now, how the desert makes a fellow want to talk? A woman to tell your story to out here is better than a dish of vanilla ice cream down there at the Wells on a hot day."

"Where did you go from Arizona?" Alva asked.

"Utah, for a while—hunting for copper up along the rim of the basin," he answered, dropping his eyes again to the shimmering valley, whose western slopes were beginning to purple. "Then back on the mother lode, blanket-sluicing tailings that a fellow with a stamp mill didn't know how to save. That gave me a good stake for Thunder Mountain—and British Columbia—and Nome. Sometimes I made a strike and sometimes I lost it. I'd work until I had something saved up, and then it would go into a hole. Generally it stayed there. A few times, perhaps, I could have bought a ranch, but, you see, I was always trying to find something *big*. I can always earn a hundred and fifty dollars a month on a hoist, and sometimes two or three times that amount on shaft and tunnel contracts, but I want *more* than that—not because I want the money so much as because I— Well—probably you wouldn't catch my point of view. It would seem too braggish."

His eyelids rose and fell over a quick glance to see if she would accept his modestly stated hope. "I've been feeling that perhaps I had more in me than just that little bit."

The conviction had come to Alva some time since that he had more in him than even he himself knew, but she said nothing in reply. The feeling of restraint still tied her tongue.

"And I've come to the point," he said, and she felt his eyes warm on hers, "where I can see the *difference* in people—I mean, the way *you* see it. When I was a boy, people were pretty much all alike, only some were good and some were downright bad. *Women* were *different*. They were *all* good—and it took quite a while to show me that perhaps I'd made a little mistake there. And then, too, I couldn't notice anything about Eastern folks—except the funny way they talked and their clothes, and *that* took quite a while.

"But I'm getting to know where I stand, now. And I'm feeling better because I can find the pay streak in people even when it's covered up pretty deep with wash." He opened out his hand in the familiar gesture. "You see—I'm glad of all that, because some day I'll use it where it ought to be used. It won't be long now before I make a strike. I'm getting good reports 'most every day. *Then*, perhaps, I'll be a little more than I am to-day."

"And then?" asked Alva, because she could not help herself.

"And then I shall ask a certain woman if she will marry me," he answered gravely. "Perhaps even before then—if she understands that I mean always to do right and won't make her suffer through whisky. But she needn't worry.

"Did you ever hear of a man falling in love with a *picture*?" he asked abruptly, with a boldness that might have been used to cover trepidation. "Would that seem like a boy's trick to you? I know of a man who did that once—a man a good deal like myself. You see—it happened this way: Wherever this fellow went around through the country, he would always

look around him at the women in the cities or towns where he worked. And the longer he looked, the more he thought that a good many of them didn't seem to be acting quite right about things. He didn't know just what was wrong—whether it was the way they regarded their homes or their husbands or the terrible baby difficulty, only it seemed as if they weren't quite holding up their end of the game.

"Now, a man has got to have standards or he doesn't amount to much. If he hasn't got a good old mother or father to give him a little family pride to come and go on, he has to manufacture something to take its place. So generally he makes up a code of some kind, even if it's only no drinks before breakfast, and he sticks to that. But the women that this fellow met didn't seem to have any codes or standards or any foolish things like that. They were like a lot of pretty, sassy kids whose husbands were only made to walk on. It was just whatever they could get away with that they did.

"And so this fellow got pretty disgusted." He said, "I've got my ideas about this thing, and if there isn't any woman around that's a great deal better than I am, I'll go to work and manufacture a woman in my mind that will do for me until I find one." And so he fixed one up from a picture he once saw, with dark eyes—like yours, I reckon—and dark hair, too. And he gave her a fine, strong body and a mind without any—er—crooked streaks in it. And he made her loyal and brave—"

Alva smiled. Honesty was making the old, old dream both fresh and poignant.

"Doesn't nearly every man do just that? Isn't she what you call your 'ideal woman'?"

"Perhaps," he conceded, so thoughtfully that she saw he had never been conscious of it before. "But this fellow went a little farther than that. He

made her better than himself. He made her think big, noble things. He didn't want her sticking around down where he was. He wanted her always just a little ahead of him, so that he could keep on working. Would you have any other kind?"

"N-no," said Alva, startled. "But he was a very unusual sort of man to want her to be better than himself." She wondered if he thought he was deceiving her. "Most men want merely a partner."

In spite of all she could do, a curious question flashed through her mind: What had Donald wanted her to be? Her thoughts raced back over the years in an attempt to recollect some hunger for inspiration that would match this one found to-day.

"It seems to me," she said thoughtfully, "that it would be very hard to find a woman for a man who *wanted* to be inspired."

"*But this man found her,*" he objected gently; whereat his theory seemed less whimsical. "And she was all the things he had figured on. Only—after he'd found her, he became afraid that he wasn't good enough for her, and that made him feel pretty bad. In fact, he used to talk to me about that side of it."

Alva shot a quick glance at him. Was he talking about some other man, after all? Forthwith, she began to formulate traps for him, but gave it up after a few futile attempts. His easy flow of ideas confused her, and made her own mental processes seem slow and stupid. For some curious reason, which ought to have been irritating, she could not grasp the trend of his thoughts, and so was forced to follow obediently wherever he led, losing more of her independence with every word. And in this strange condition of mind, which was more pleasant than she would ever have suspected, she unknowingly took another step.

He was lying back against the rock on which she sat, his eyes sometimes on hers, but more often lazily surveying the valley through half-closed lids. While his eyes were cast down, her own inventoried him. Again her restless imagination made him a type, but this time it was with a more generous award of keenness and breadth of vision than before. As she followed the simply told stories of his young manhood, as they came uncynically, but with accurate weighing, from his lips, she found other stories infinitely more interesting in the sensitive aquiline nose and cleft chin. He spoke of many rough affairs in which he had been involved, but he did not boast of the clean living that she saw in the clear eyes and skin. Neither did he say he was self-respecting, although she read it as well in the well-kept, down-drooping mustache as in his manner of thought.

So close was she to him there in the solitude, where not even the hum of a fly broke the silence, that a new thrall laid hold of her, and this time it was the sense of his physical attractiveness. Without being conscious of it, what little of masculinity she had built up in herself during the past months faded quickly away before the complete virility that lay at ease an arm's length away. For the first time in years, Alva Leigh became gladly feminine again, secretly admiring his length and straightness of limb—speculating idly on the strength that must lie in those big brown hands—wondering why he parted his hair on the side where it was thinnest—eagerly waiting for his lips to part so that she might see his white, even teeth—and, most inexplicable of all, smiling, unconsciously, when he smiled.

But it was only a moment before, horrified, she realized what had happened and angrily broke off the insidious train of thought. A fierce pang shot through her when she saw how lit-

tle she had accomplished. And yet, as she dared another look and let the honesty of his words obtain its due, the conviction, warm and fragrant, stole into her welcoming heart that she was attempting an unwarranted task. If there were such a thing as truthfulness in this world, it was surely shining on her now out of this strong man's eyes. If clean-heartedness could sound in a voice, it was to be heard in every deep, steady tone of this man beside her. Once more the memory of his words beside Donald's grave ebbed into the tumult of her emotions, and she forgot the afternoon's grim purpose. With a warm rush of gratitude in which there were some dangerous, sweet, throbbing things yet undefined, she began to prepare the way for her confession. But before she could speak, he was talking again, and her chance was gone.

"Some one to talk to is a godsend out here on the desert," he was saying, with a slow smile, "and I never blamed this fellow for running on so about his womanly ideas. In fact, if a man hasn't a little company out here, he gets into a bad way.

"Did you ever hear of the 'desert loco'? Probably it's fairly scarce in New York City, although I've not been there to see. But out here it's a troublesome thing. Whisky brings it mainly, but sometimes it comes to men from having no one to talk to, and nothing to look at except the desert, and nothing to think about except the things they *didn't* do. And so they talk to themselves, which is bad for them, and they go to remembering nicer places where they once lived, and that makes it worse. And after a while they grow quiet and queer and begin to *hate* things, themselves first of all. Only"—and he looked up with a laugh that showed his understanding of the subject's strange psychology—"you'd never know it."

"You mean—they conceal it?" asked Alva, puzzled.

"Just that," he said, with the enthusiasm that always preceded a quick flow of words. "And yet I don't reckon that we desert folks are much different from city people, after all. The loco man only lives a little more inside himself than you and I. We all have our own little worlds right in our own heads, and the funny part of it is that every man's world is different from the next fellow's. Of course, we think the world we see is the same that every one else sees, and so it really is, because there's only *one* real world—and yet our thoughts make it different for each of us. Did you ever wonder, for instance, how it would be to look at things with another person's mind. My hat, here, looks gray to me—but it may be *white* to you."

"It *is* white," said Alva positively, then laughed.

"No," he grinned happily. "Not while it's my hat. But you see what I mean. People get *notions*, sometimes about articles like this hat—more often about other people and injuries that they think another person has done them. And they feed on their notion and twist it around in their minds and chew on it till it gets in pretty bad shape. Finally, they really go loco about that one thing—but"—and he smiled again—"you would never know it. They go about their daily work just the same. They seem just the same. They *are* just the same, except for that one little kink in their minds, which they're smart enough to hide from you—sometimes."

"Take Danny the Bum, for instance. Once Danny had a wife and family, but the whisky beat him. So he cleared out and went prospecting on the desert. A few years of that and Danny began to have notions. Because he let them grow on him, they changed his mind—you might say they just *ate* it up. Now, I can't look inside of Danny's head today, but I'll cheerfully bet my share of the Gun Sight Mine that it's the queer-

est, crookedest place you'd ever see—with a lot of little black hates, that never get anywhere, running around like mad inside and killing off everything decent that tries to grow.

"And so we have to keep our heads as level as we can, out here," he said soberly. "I get notions myself sometimes, but I get rid of them by talking to other people about them. Don't you?"

"Y-e-e-s," she answered slowly—and then, with a deep breath, put her suspicions away, she hoped, forever. "Indeed I do. And I must tell you something right away—"

"Oh, let me say *my* piece first," he interrupted boyishly. "About this—this — Well, now—how can I say it? These foolish *love* ideas that a man *will* have—do you reckon that they could ever be loco ideas, too?"

"They, too," she answered solemnly, though her face twitched. "In fact, they can spring up from nothing at all and subsist on less real fact than anything else in the whole wide world."

"Golly!" he muttered, seeming to concede her superior knowledge on the point. "That's surely mean for *him*."

"But you've already said that your friend built up his fancy merely on a picture," she objected pointedly. "You couldn't ask for a better sample of the loco than that."

"But he isn't loco," he stated calmly. "He's going to get her."

"He only *thinks* so," she retorted. "That's his *notion*. There may be obstacles that are simply insuperable."

"He would make them disappear," was the answer. "Don't forget that they would seem insuperable only to *her*. Don't you suppose that if he could show her—"

But Alva had risen to her feet and was looking at the watch at her belt with an exclamation of surprise. Her hour—and his—had flown.

And so, presently, they were walking

back to Magnet in the early evening, the man amazingly happy in spite of the fact that something had been left unsaid—the woman with her mind swept clean of one ill, but wordless with the strange pangs of another. For each step that took them farther away from the valley brought Alva farther away from that other dread vale into whose shadows she had been descending until a saner force had caught her up, and she softened to her companion swiftly, her sensitive lips quivering with the confession still unspoken, her hand more friendly when, swinging, it happened to touch his own. Some curious power in him seemed bringing out all that was truly woman in her, and although she tried to fight off its ascendancy, yet something was always staying her hand, whispering that to-day she had entered on a new life through her Samaritan's guidance, a life that was both sweeter and infinitely more complete. Once she feared, momentarily, that she might have been the subject of his mild dissertation on "notions," but finally saw that it was, of course, impossible and so took heart again.

"It's always daytime longest in the East," he said, as they paused on the last hummock that sloped down to the town, and he pointed to the glowing hills. "Night comes first where the sun goes down, and you think the day is gone. But they save up a little for you right at the end—to go on until to-morrow. It's that way with 'most everything, I guess. I'll be leaving you, about here. The only thing we forgot to-day was the thing we set out to do—to locate a claim for you. But if that's all that you'll blame me for, I can figure on getting my usual sleep. *Some day*"—and her newly timid eyes could not combat his boldness—"some day we'll make you a real owner. You have a claim already that you don't know about."

As Alva walked on alone through the outskirts toward her establishment, she could not resist a backward glance. Although, as he had said, they had left undone the thing they had set out to do, yet she knew that something infinitely more important had been accomplished, for she had been left with so complete a sense of trust as to be almost happy. In this clear-thinking frame of mind, it would have been foolish to deny that the man loved her, for both words and actions had made it perfectly plain. And, when she came to think of it, there seemed no good reason why she should thrust back anything so human or so wonderfully sweet. Even Donald, she thought with a sudden throb, would not object to her using so genuine a love to aid her ends. And so she did not stop at the little cemetery as she passed. She would ask no more questions of her grave. She had gained a stronger, saner aid to-day than any morbid deductions could secure. She had located a claim, and she would develop it.

She smiled to herself, wondering if he knew on how many points he had touched her. Also, she wondered again as to his quiet talk on "notions," until a remembrance of the phrase "without any crooked streaks in it" came to mind. Could he have been thinking of her, after all? Was he thinking of her *now*? She looked back again and was confessedly disappointed. She saw from the way in which he strode steadily through the brush that he had put his mind to work on something else. Still looking, however, she saw him enter the main street of the town near its head, where a group of men were waiting for him. Alva thought their attitudes showed that a question was being put to him for decision. Presently the unknown matter seemed to be settled, for he was the first to move on, taking one of the group with him. As she saw their steps lead them in the direc-

tion of the Miners' Hall, Alva felt that something must have happened in Magnet that called for action.

A faint thrill went through her as she began to see how the camp's crude legal machinery was set in motion. Some one had made a complaint. Some one had said, "Such and such a man has done wrong," and had produced his proofs. Whereupon, a small body of men, self-appointed, came together, patiently reviewed the evidence, deliberated in their quiet way, and then acquitted or dealt out punishment with a finality that brooked no appeal.

Yet, in spite of her appreciation of its genuineness, Alva felt far from sure that the machinery would always work so smoothly. Although the committee would act quickly enough on a recent, flagrant crime, yet this looser form of government naturally called for very certain proofs, and if the evidence did not convince at once, the case would probably be shrugged away. And so, for all the new faith with which the past hour had inspired her, she began to feel almost as impotent to secure full justice when the time arrived as on her first day; a saddened mood that held her until she reached the door of her tent. There she was again reminded of yesterday's hysterical decisions, for on her doorstep sat the forlorn figure of Danny the Bum, squinting up at an imaginary adversary with whom he was carrying on a mumbled conversation.

Never a tall man, various causes had shortened and bowed the unfortunate Danny until, in his huddled attitude, he looked almost like a dwarf. His torn, misshapen khaki clothes, with their pristine brown blackened by the constant rubbing of food-greasy hands, hung on his spare frame as limply as a towel on a post. Circling his red, leathery forehead, he wore the rim of a battered derby hat through whose crown his uncut gray thatch thrust up like a clump of withered bunch grass.

On his right foot he wore a clumsy brogan—on his left, the top of an Oxford tie.

"Danny," said Alva pityingly, "I want you to work for me for a few days. Perhaps, if you keep sober, you can earn enough to buy a pair of shoes."

The man squinted up at her cautiously, then shook his head in utter dejection.

"Shoes," he said hopelessly, "*shoes* is *four dollars!*"

"But that's only four days' work," remonstrated Alva wonderingly. "Surely you can keep sober that long. Don't be afraid, Danny. Stay in the kitchen when you're not working. I won't let them get you."

"Will you?" the man quavered, his blurred visage lighting up with hope. "Kin I sleep there, too? Night's the hard time fer me. But, say!" he cried excitedly. "If there really *wuz* shoes in it, I c'u'd lock myself in, now couldn't I?"

"But, no," he went on, and plucked thoughtfully at the hair protruding through his hat. "I reckon, after all, it wouldn't be just right to confine a big business man like me at night when things are going on. I—I got to 'tend to my affairs, you see. I—I got *business* to transact."

"A claim, of course," smiled Alva, while she puzzled over ways to straighten him out.

"That's wot," said Danny keenly. "You know how it is. You've got one, too?"

"Perhaps—perhaps I have, Danny," the woman answered. "I don't really know."

"Like me," said Danny promptly. "A felluh took mine away from me once, but I can't think *who* it was. Or where the claim lay. I'm sure it wasn't old Peter Silk, becuz he took Mexican Frank's just as soon as he heard the reward was out, and it wasn't Dick Randall, becuz he got Jaffray's——"

"Danny!" the woman cried suddenly, with a note of horror in her voice. "How did Randall get the Jaffray claim?"

Unprepared for the sudden attack, the man shrank back as if he had been struck. His face grew even more vacuous than before. He seemed paralyzed with fright.

"Danny!" commanded the woman savagely. "Tell me what I want to know, or I'll have you put in jail." Gripping him convulsively by the arms, she shook the impotent shell of a man to and fro till his teeth rattled. "Tell me instantly how he got that claim!"

"I—I—I—I ain't sayin' *how* he got it," chattered Danny. "He *took* it, that's all I know. And you won't put me in jail nuther—'cuz there ain't any jail. Young Jaffray—he's dead, you know—deader than a doornail—nice, young felluh, wot won't ever come back. He wouldn't do nuthin' to Randall, no, he wouldn't—and Randall, he can't do nuthin' to *him*." Danny's voice rose to a quavering falsetto, and he looked wildly about, like a trapped animal trying to escape. "But he didn't fuss with *him* much. He had rights, you see—not like a stick-up man that needs money like he did last night. He hit me in the eye, he did—down there at Tiger Lil's."

Alva's grip relaxed and her hands fell limply at her sides. Incoherent as was the jumble of words, the accursed suspicion instantly leaped into life again and built up another swiftly linking chain of proof. At other times, her saner judgment would have contemptuously rejected the worthless mixture of hearsay and falsity, but to-day, in spite of all her good spirits of a moment ago, Alva suddenly became irresponsible. The virulent sickness that had been growing in her for so long needed only a shock like this to drain her vitality away like blood drawn off into a basin. Unhearing and colorless,

nauseated by the return of the old conviction, she swayed dizzily to and fro.

No sooner did Danny feel himself free than his small stock of courage returned and his features brightened. He did not know why the woman's voice had failed her or why her face had grown ashen, but at the first faint glimmerings of distress, he felt impelled to offer all the valuable information at his command.

"Oh, don't you worry about what I'm tellin' you," Danny expostulated. "It's all true. He's a bad man. I've got him all writ down in my little book—all I see him do, so's I kin read it to myself every night." Fumbling in his tattered vest, he whipped out a battered, coverless notebook, and waved it before her unseeing eyes. "Oh, he's a reggular business man, Danny is. Everything he sees and hears he writes down and keeps. *All kinds of things*," he whispered mysteriously in her ear. "Skin games he sees—and murders—and places he got hand-outs—and ways to find lost mines at night—and lots more things that'll make him a rich man some day."

"Last night, it was, I see him a-talkin' to you—and I writes it down. And I followed him when he went away—and I'll get him yet. You don't know where he went, but the *book* knows! Tiger Lil's—that's where he went. Oh, hoh! So you didn't know he was a friend of hers!" Danny exclaimed delightedly, as Alva shrank back in disgust. "You bet he's her friend! Everybody knows it. Your old Sarah knows it, too."

"But say! He hit me in the eye. He shouldn't have did that—it hurt. And so I followed him—all night I followed him—and when I came back, I writes it in me little book. And that's what makes me a valible man in this yere community," he continued proudly. "That's why they got to pay attention when I talk. I got information on important points, you see. And some day

these yere big men around yere—they'll get into their ottomobiles and come to my office and say:

"'Danny,' they'll say, 'you know and we know that things ha' gotta be regulated in this yere camp, and we hear that you've got a lot of big ideas in your little book. Now we're willing to make a great big offer just to take one little peek inside. We hereby offer you as much as *ten thousand*—why, *pshaw*, no—money ain't nuthin' to us, or to you, nuther—we offer you a *hundred thousand dollars* in good hard cash just for that one little valuable book.'

"And then I looks 'em over, and while I'm pretending to admire their ottomobiles and their silk hats and their big, thick watch chains, I see 'em a-winkin' at each other. And wot do I know *then*? I knows they're figurin' to get my book *too cheap*!

"And so I gets wery, wery ca'm—and I leans back in my revolv'in' chair—wot goes round and round when you touch it just with your little finger—and I puts my feet on my big desk, and I says to 'em: 'Gentlemen,' says I, with a yawn and a stretch, 'I'm sorry to say that my brekfuss ain't settin' just ezackly right this morning, and I ain't overanxious to do business. You make that offer of yours a bonded lease for *ten times* that little bunch of money, and mebbe I'll take time to consider it. *Good day, gentlemen—good day!*'"

CHAPTER VII.

Although Alva woke long before dawn, a splitting headache held her inert among her tumbled coverings, staring up at the ridgepole of her tent as she thought she had stared up into the darkness all night long. Not until the long, hot fingers of the midsummer sun lanced through the flap of her tent and she heard old Sarah pottering around the stove, could she rouse herself to take up another day's false

duties. Heavy, dull-eyed, and listless, she went about the dreary business of dressing with never a look into the mirror that would have given her some much-needed advice, and finally joined the old woman in the kitchen, her hair wound loosely about her head and her face congested with the night's impotent thinking.

"Well, this is the day you're popular!" remarked the hardy frontiers woman cheerily, as she stuffed greasewood into the stove. "The Town-site Company's big dance comes off to-night. They'll all be honeyin' around here soon. I wisht I wuz young and beautiful again. I'd like to whirl a few meself."

"Dance?" echoed Alva, with a mirthless laugh. "Why should any one want to dance *here*?"

"You'll see why soon enough when the young felluhs begin snoopin' round," was Sarah's sage retort. "You can't keep young blood still, even in the Funerals. I guess you'll go, fast enough. I never see a pretty girl yet that wasn't crazy to be pestered to death over a dance, and you needn't think *you'll* get by, missy!"

"That's what I say," agreed a breezy voice in the doorway, as Mrs. Baker's bulky figure announced her morning call. "You and me and Andy's wife and that freckled misery from Bindelmann's books ain't very many to entertain three hundred men, but we ought to try it if only for society's sake. Baker says the committee scraped the desert clean as far south as the borax works, and only bagged a squaw. But the new stage driver claims that Ash Meadows is sending the spring tender's sister if she can only find a somewheres-new flour sack for an evening waist, and Amargosa's good for a half dozen Mormon calamities 'most always, so I guess we can keep them hopping. For the land's sake, Alva! What is the mat-

ter with your eyes? Don't say you won't *go!*"

"I hadn't thought of it," was the listless reply. "I don't see why I should."

"I don't see why you *shouldn't*," retorted the keen-eyed Mrs. Baker promptly. "See here, now. Don't you go and get *queer*. I know you're always wearing black, but I always figure that we owe a heap more to the living than— Why, you don't want people to go to thinking that you're snobby and stuck-up, do you? You *can't!* You're a business woman!"

The older woman surveyed the other's slipshod attire for a moment with a searching eye, and then let her voice soften with sympathy. "If there's anybody around here that ain't treating you just exactly right and's making you feel unhappy, you just let me know," she said. "But, pshaw! What's the use of talking about it! Of *course* you'll go—with Blewitt, too—or I miss my guess. He's had the camp's only full-dress suit, including pants, airing on a bush for nearly a week."

"Don't put too much of your money on Blewitt, Mis' Baker," remarked Sarah, while the two worthies exchanged knowing glances. "I guess I know who's got Miss Pretty picked out long ago."

"Sarah," commanded Alva curtly, "go see if the tables are ready. We've pottered along this morning till we're very late." Then she turned to Mrs. Baker.

"Yes. I'll go to the dance to-night," she said, with a hot face and glittering eyes. "But it won't be with the man you're thinking of. No, I won't tell you my reasons," as the other showed her surprise. "You'll know why some day. All of you will know it."

"*Why!* I didn't know he was *married!*" quavered her friend. "Don't tell me he's been *deceiving* you, Alva!"

Alva stopped in her work with a look of mingled exasperation and wonder.

"Is that the only reason you can think of, Amelia? Can't a man do *anything* else that's wrong?"

"Not—not—not so's you wouldn't go with him to a *dance!*" stammered Mrs. Baker. "Why—I went once with a horse thief, down to Hackberry! He told me they were after him, all right, before we went, but he figured he could go to the dance and get away again before they began to bother him."

"I'm the lickinest-best waltzer in any five counties north of the Colomaydo, Amelia," says he, "and I kin prove it, too—if they'll only give me a show for my white alley."

"But they were that sore at him that they only gave us time for the grand march and a stingy little polka before they spoke to him, and the poor fellow never had his chance. You see, Alva—*dances* are *different*. People have got to be on their good behavior at *them*. Killings and foolishness don't go. Well—think it over before you go to giving up your friends. Men ain't as bad as they seem. They've just got to be doing things all the time, I guess. Here! Take this. It's a letter I brought down from the post office for you. I guess the man who addressed it didn't like to give himself away."

With breakfast over, Alva soon found proof of Sarah's shrewdness in the shamelessly loitering tactics of several sheep-eyed young miners around the front door, and so made a quick retreat to the kitchen before she could be approached. Here she leaned heavily against the rear doorway, with her forehead pressed against her arm, and stared out at the fierce, hot morning.

The softer lights of spring had given way long since to a merciless, dry brightness—that came on as soon as the sun blazed up over the glittering ranges. It seemed as if night were

no sooner gone than day leaped up, full armed and fiendishly eager to clamp down the brazen dome of noontide on the sun-baked plain.

And as Alva stood there staring with fixed fierceness at the yellow ground, where the beady-eyed lizards flickered through the thin shadows of the grease-wood and the ugly refuse of the camp glittered, unburied, in the searching light, it came to her that *she*, apparently, was the only person in Magnet who knew the man Randall as he really was. Long ago she had acknowledged his strength, but she had never seen till now how cleverly it cloaked his selfishness.

She began to see two personalities in him: One of the two was keen, purposeful, and active-minded, even charitable and gentle where it suited his aims. The other was animated by a calculating selfishness that was controlled by an exceptional brain. Of course, there was no such thing as remorse in his character, for naturally he could not afford to waste time on it. Nor was there pity, except where policy dictated that it should be shown.

And so she glowered, moody-eyed, from her doorway, feeding her overwrought mind on miserable thoughts until she had nothing but hatred for a man who could deceive her so shrewdly.

Alongside the tent the brush crackled as some one strode hastily through it from the street in front. Before she knew it, she found herself looking into Randall's eyes.

Taller and noticeably broader in his working clothes than in the better-shaped garments she had always seen him wear, he dropped his shining lunch bucket on the ground and laughed freely as he put out his hand to restrain the shrinking that he thought was due only to surprise.

"I figured you'd be here," he said, with a twinkle in his eye over the success of his small stratagem. "Those

young friends of yours are thicker than flies around a sugar barrel out in front. I've only a minute now before I go on shift—but I want you to go with me to that dance to-night. *Will you?*"

Vigorous and confident, clear-eyed and clean, there was an almost oppressive freshness of youth and strength in his movements. Less a man to-day than a big, fearless, laughing boy, with his fine-haired, brown mustache and full brown throat that swelled against the band of his shirt, he thrust so overpowering a sense of virility on her as to make her head swim. She threw up her arm convulsively, as if to ward off something.

A thousand thoughts flashed through her mind in the tumult that his personality forced on her, but out of all her mingled feelings of fear and attraction a single impulse rose dominant, and that, curiously enough, contained nothing that concerned Donald. It was one of purely personal anger—of disgust at a man who would deliberately leave her companionship to seek that of a common mining-camp entertainer.

"After your careful confessions of yesterday," she said, with biting distinctness, "I didn't believe that all women would seem alike to you—but I see I was mistaken."

At this curious answer to his invitation, the man drew back a step and stood still. Whether or not he was surprised by the sudden attack, he gave no sign of anything except the most acute attention. With eyes as steady as his motionless body, he stood watching and waiting silently, as if he saw that she had not yet had all her say.

Translating this as pure brazenness and scorning him the more for it, she lowered her voice so as to make her words bite deeper.

"Why come to me for your dances?" she asked, through her set teeth, while her eyes glittered. "Why not seek those who are more accustomed to make your

entertainment? Can it be that you, like the 'friend' you spoke of so feelingly yesterday, are seeking inspiration? What makes you think you can find it here? You flatter me too much. I had not thought I would ever be used to serve so interesting a purpose. In fact, I must confess that I had never considered entering the race at all—and shall have to decline now."

His face whitened perceptibly and his brows knitted, but he drew no farther back. With his eyes still quiet on hers, he seemed to be trying to understand the nature of her hot anger rather than its words.

She felt this and instantly grew furious. It was too much as if he were a judicial parent meditating the tantrums of a petulant child.

"Go!" she commanded contemptuously. "You sicken me. I only wonder if your curious sense of decency has been waked enough to keep you from approaching me again. I shall go to your house to-night, but it will not be with any one so magnificently adaptable as yourself. Have I made myself clear?"

"No, Miss Leigh," he answered quietly, "you have *not*. It so happens that I know what you're driving at—but you are mistaken."

She stared for a startled moment, then laughed derisively. "Do you ask me to disbelieve what every one in the camp knows? Because I am the last to know must I be the first to be deceived again?"

"Miss Leigh," said he, while his eyes began at last to command hers, "doesn't your good sense tell you that you've got me figured out all wrong here? Of course, if you have what you think is proof of something against me, it would be hard to leave it out, but let all that go for a minute. Ask yourself about *me*—just plain *me*. Have I acted like a dishonorable man? What is it that

backs up your proof? What's behind it all?"

Alva hesitated before she cast off all restraint. His words demanded the precise answer that, she suddenly felt, she could not give. Confronted with the necessity of flatly accusing him of friendship for the other woman, her proofs seemed so pitifully thin and weak that she knew she could not face the look that would surely come into those relentless eyes.

She put up her hand in a repelling gesture that seemed to express both weariness and disgust, although more than half of it was fear.

"Why should I have a reason?" she asked, with a swift assumption of an attack to which there could be no defense. "The matter is entirely personal. As a matter of fact, I—I—I—have taken a dislike to you—a personal dislike. What is to be looked into there? Even if nothing could be proved about you, I fail to see why I should be forced to discuss my private tastes. Yes, we can let it stand on *that*," she went on, as he began to draw back. "You won't be far wrong if you think that there are things about you that I find detestable—personal qualities that are intensely repugnant—things that I—I—"

Alva's voice faded away before the awful look that came into the man's eyes. Astonishment, sorrow, pitiful disappointment, and a momentarily self-accusing shame swept across his face in waves. His chin fell, and he grew almost haggard. He shrank back as if he had been lashed with a whip, his eyes full of a mortal hurt. She had cut deep into the only spot that he could never hope to protect.

"I guess—I guess I can't say much against *that*," he said, in a colorless voice. "I reckon it wouldn't be much use to try. *That's* something I can't ever beat—no—not ever." His eyes were dull and lifeless—a blank wall

behind which he was passing through cruel tortures. His hand, generally so expressive in gestures, moved weakly as he tried to collect his thoughts. "I wonder how I was so big a fool as not to see your feelings before. Perhaps I could have changed some, then—or tried to fix myself up different. But probably *not*. If I'm a mean, low fellow, associating with bums, male and female—why, then, I reckon I've always been one—and it wouldn't do much good to try to change."

He paused and raised his haggard face.

"I guess I'll go now," he said. "There isn't anything that I can do or say. I know, of course, just as I always *have* known, that there are plenty of things about me that would seem unpleasant to a lady, but I've always kept hoping that they were only the little things that could be changed—that she might even *like* to change, so as to show them as her work. I've hoped that they were only stringers, and that the main vein was just a little higher grade.

"But I reckon I didn't make a close enough assay. *Your* weigh-up seems to have been a little more correct. Still—I can't help wishing that you'd tell me why—that you'd be fair and show your samples. Somehow, it seems as if you had made your inspection just a teeny bit *late*. Because, if my clothes aren't clean, or my mind polished up and perfumed, or my remarks tied up with little pink ribbons, why, they weren't that way yesterday, either—"

He halted, struck by a sudden thought.

"Nor yesterday—nor yesterday, either," he repeated.

For some reason, his eyes lost their dulled look, and grew brighter with returned vitality. He turned back and scrutinized her as she stood with her head averted and her hand put out to motion him away. He looked once

more—with a hungering, irresistible probing of his relentless eyes—then made one great step forward and caught her hand.

"It *isn't* that—and you know it!" he whispered fiercely. "You *couldn't* hate me so after all these weeks."

"How dare you?" she flamed. "Un-loose my hand! *Go!* I *do* hate you and despise you, just as I said—" She broke into a sudden storm of tears and hid her face in her arm.

"*Do* you hate me?" he murmured exultantly in her ear. "Why, Alva—I don't care. Go right ahead—you can hurt me all you want to *now*."

"*Go!*" she cried from behind her shielding arm. "I have nothing to say."

"Yes. I'll go," he answered happily, and released her hand. He laughed outright and squared his shoulders. His precious possession had not been stolen, after all. "You wouldn't say such foolish things about me unless the *real* reason behind it all was no good—and so I'm not afraid of that one, either. Good-by—till to-night." He picked up his pail, and was gone.

When Alva's next connected thought came to her, she was in her dining room, staring around among her empty tables. She felt weak and shell-like—as if she had been sapped of all power to think. The moment he had begun to speak for himself—at the mere sound of his voice—she had weakly lost faith in her convictions again. Something was wrong—somewhere—everywhere—and she rubbed her hand against her forehead in an attempt to ease her troubled mind.

Something scratched her cheek, and she saw the letter that Mrs. Baker had given her clutched in her fingers. She studied the crudely printed address with puzzled eyes, caught the scent of musk which established the letter's source better than a signature could have done,

then opened it, her lips curling with disdain.

Ask Dick Randall why they never tried to find the man that shot young Jaffray.

Alva threw back her head and laughed—loud and hysterically. At the sound of a step behind her, she turned, still laughing wildly, and saw Duncan, clean shaven and well dressed, standing in the doorway.

"About that dance to-night," he began eagerly, with a fatuous smile over his reception. "I came——"

"To ask me to go," interrupted Alva. "I'll be delighted."

She met him halfway and gave him both her hands, her wide eyes and heightened color giving out so vivid a sense of what he thought was pleasure that his face reddened and he stammered.

"It's about *time* you asked me!" she heard a wildly vibrant voice saying. "*You!* To say all those nice things to me only two nights ago and then never come near me for a whole day! Is that the way you treat ladies up in Idaho?" Her voice, surely—but where did such strange words come from?

"But you big, good-looking men are all alike," her voice went on, with a gayly railing note. "If I told you that I'd refused another man to wait for you, you'd be so conceited that you'd never dance with me at all—now, would you?" And this strange, warm-breathed, big-eyed Alva was suddenly in overpowering proximity to him, her fresh, red mouth pouting her mock anger dangerously close to his own. "Don't tell me that the only friend I have in camp would treat me that way."

"But Randall——" the man stammered, unwilling to believe his ears.

"Oh, if you don't want me, just say so," she said airily. "Are you making up other men's dance cards for them? Isn't mine enough? Run along, now, and don't bother me. You're a nuisance."

What time shall you come for me?" And she saw some one's fingers actually twisting a button on his coat.

"Around nine o'clock," he answered thickly, and reached out his arms, only to feel her slip tantalizingly out of his grasp.

Noon and the dinner hour came.

Wherever Alva passed between the lines of crowded tables, men covertly wiped their lips and leaned back with a smile to speak about the dance.

"Duncan's rightly no waltzer, ma'am. You'll not be forgetting your real friends to-night."

"I'm Mormonish in my ways, and pray before each dance. Kin I start work now on that third two-step?"

"Make him show his union card, lady. Me—I got a certificate from the government on my dancing!"

At the end of one of the tables she encountered a different element, however, for as she paused there, a man with a heavy black beard, whom she recognized as Randall's relief at the Cactus shaft, spoke to her in an undertone:

"Is Duncan your real choice for to-night, ma'am?"

"Yes. I expect to go with Mr. Duncan," Alva answered, before she thought. "But I hardly see why you ask."

Dropping her eyes rather casually to meet his own, she was surprised to find them entirely lacking in the semiflirtatious interest she had expected. On the contrary, the black-bearded man seemed weighing some policy in his mind, and the flavor of watchfulness and possible interference that the look held made her flush with anger.

"Are you quite sure that it is your business to know with whom I go to dances?" she asked icily.

"Well," answered the man, with a deadly definiteness that she had encountered once or twice before among such men in Magnet, "I simply wanted to

know, and now I do know. No harm done, lady. Scull me the cake, Jim."

An hour later, the tool boy from the Cactus shaft knocked at her door and handed in a note nipped 'twixt greasy thumb and finger. The note had been written hastily in pencil—and there was a drop of oil on the outside. Alva's eyes hardened as soon as she saw it.

"There is no answer," she said, and, tearing the note in pieces, she let it fall on the floor. As the boy lounged away, with his tongue in his cheek, she looked down and read on an upturned fragment: "don't." Alva slid her foot across the paper and blotted out the word.

That afternoon she spent with Mrs. Baker, who, after puzzling over her friend's alternate fits of gayety and moroseness, finally spoke her mind as follows:

"You've got just the same amount of sense to-day as a week-old jack rabbit. Something tells me you'll be making a lot of trouble to-night among the men. I must say I never figured you were such a perfectly scandalous flirt."

The woman with the ever-growing pain in the back of her head looked utterly incredulous.

"*Flirt?*" she echoed hollowly. "Then the desert has indeed changed me." And, after another moment's staring at the calm and collected postmistress, she murmured an inaudible good-by, and slipped out of the door, a thoughtful, almost frightened, look on her face.

As she passed down the street, she saw Randall. He was standing on a corner, talking in low tones with one of the men who had met him the afternoon before, and the fragmentary sentence, "He bought a pair of spurs at four o'clock," came to her ears as she passed by with only a faint inclination of her head. Almost at once, a step sounded behind her, and she felt him walking at her side.

"Unless you want to make both of us

look foolish, you might let me walk a little way with you," he said. "People are watching."

"I'm not responsible," she answered coldly.

"Perhaps not," was the reply, "and I'm risking things much worse than what you might say, but I *must* tell you again that you may make a mistake to-night——"

"I shall ask you to leave me here," she interrupted. "I don't care to have anything to do with you—and I'm quite able to take care of myself."

He looked at her with a wistful expression in his fine eyes, while his face grew even graver than before.

"I'm sorry," he said, with no bitterness in his tones. "Remember this much, anyway"—and his eyes shone on her with so much of their old, kindly light that she could not help marveling—"I'll always be *there*!"

Evening came, and lights sprang up in the new, yellow-boarded town hall. At nine o'clock, Mrs. Baker made her appearance, ostensibly to borrow a brooch, but when she found that Alva was dressed and ready, she hurried away without the ornament. Her house was full of ribboned Mormon girls fighting for the mirror, she said, and the front parlor was a foot deep in violet talcum.

"Oh, yes," she added briefly over her shoulder. "There's something doing to-night among the men, too, though I don't know just what it is. We'll hear more about it in the morning."

Alva resumed her seat by the dining-room lamp and took up her unread book again. She had been there for nearly an hour, staring at the blank walls of the tent and wondering what mad impulse had driven her to accept a comparatively unknown escort. The hysteria of the night and morning had given way to a resigned floating with the current, yet she could not help pondering that twice-rejected advice and the vague

rumors that had come to Mrs. Baker's ears.

But although her regret for her bargain steadily grew, she had not long to puzzle over these things, for Duncan presented himself promptly, and she saw that she would have to go.

"If only he has been drinking, I can refuse," she thought hopefully. But there was nothing objectionable in Duncan's face or manner. The only thing she noticed about him was a certain quietness that contrasted oddly with his good spirits of that morning.

As she looked at him in the full light of the lamp, however, she began to realize how very little she actually knew about the man, and, except for his deceptive smile, how thin-lipped and hard-faced he was. She said something to make his lips part and saw that his smile was forced; she knew now that it had always been that way, if she had only taken time to study it. The conviction grew on her that something was very wrong with him to-night, and, in an agony of regret for her rashness, she cast about desperately for some reasonable excuse that would allow her to escape.

Music started up in the hall next door while she kept him waiting on various pretexts, and she heard the grate of feet on the porch. Again she studied him, and saw a hidden tension in his attitude and a very obvious effort to hear what was being said outside. He passed his tongue across his lips, as if they were dry, and swallowed with a visible effort.

"Well," he said nervously. "Well? Shall we go?"

It seemed to Alva as if she were living and acting in a dream. She could not guess what the man before her had done, but she now knew perfectly well that he had committed some crime. And yet she felt as helpless as if she were in the grip of some horrible nightmare. While every instinct fought against the

action, the ghastly shape of impending tragedy so filled her mind that it numbed her and held her in silence as she walked with him to the hall. As they neared the door, the horror of her position finally overcame everything else, and she halted, with a blanched face. But other couples behind them forced them on, and she passed into the well-filled room and crossed as quickly as possible to where Mrs. Baker, flanked by her Mormon friends, sat surrounded by a dozen men.

No sooner had she gained a seat near the protecting wing and collected herself, than she, in turn, was surrounded, and, with the strengthening influence of friendly faces buoying her up, she decided to feign illness and escape at the first opportunity. Duncan, she saw, was hovering about on the outside of the circle, but her sensibilities, now grown tremendously acute, interpreted every nervous half laugh he gave, and read every uneasy look.

In spite of Mrs. Baker's presence, a chill of fear gathered around her heart. She began to be unable to look about her. Music, gayety, laughter, polished floor, and hum of voices, all became a ghastly travesty of enjoyment. For all the set smile with which she made her answers, her face grew pinched and white. Lifting her misery-full eyes with an effort at the sound of a voice close to her elbow, she felt herself grow cold from head to foot. The night-hoist engineer from the Cactus shaft—the black-bearded man at the end of the table—was speaking to her in the same significant tones that he had used that morning. When she caught the note of warning in his voice, she knew that the end was not far off.

"Lady," said he, "I guess you ain't feeling very peart to-night. You look like you'd better be home. I'll take you, lady, if you want to go."

The look of agony that she turned on him was enough to let him read her

instant consent, but before she could rise, the music started up, and Duncan stood before her.

"My dance," he said, with his thin smile. "Not figuring to steal this lady away from me, are you, Ryan?"

The black-bearded man rose as Alva rose, and moved away, with barely a glance at the questioner.

"No. I never worked at thieving much," he said. "I'm 'most too tired out at night to have *two* trades. I'll be waiting, lady—out by the door. I reckon you'll be going soon."

It was on the tip of her tongue to cry out to him to wait, but as she faltered, the black-bearded man quickened his steps toward the door, as if he saw something there, and in another moment it was too late. They were standing. The music was playing. Eyes were watching. They must dance.

As they moved across the hall and turned down the side in a waltz, Alva felt that every one's eyes were on them. She also saw that the doorway was full of men, in some way a different-looking group from the idlers who generally hung around the entrance. As their slow circling brought them nearer, she saw Randall in the front row and behind him the set, watchful faces of the men whom she had often seen with him before. Beside him stood the forlorn, but picturesque, figure of Danny the Bum, resurrected lately from some hiding place, much the worse for wear.

Nearer and nearer the circling two came to the group in the doorway, and more and more Alva felt the force of their eyes. When they came opposite, she saw Randall turn to the crowd and shake his head. While she wondered what it all meant, she felt her partner's arm slacken and saw Danny the Bum spring out of the group with a shrill cry of alarm.

"That's him! There he is!" he shouted. "The felluh wot held 'em up at the point of rocks!"

Instantly Alva felt herself swung ten feet or more away across the slippery floor. Whether the man pushed her or she sprang away she never knew, but immediately she was crouching against a bench by the wall. Looking back, she saw a revolver flash out in Duncan's hand, as the men at the door broke for him across the shining floor.

Randall was foremost, his face distorted in an effort to reach the shrill-voiced Danny a step ahead. Later, she remembered that he cried out to the men behind him not to shoot.

In front of her and all around the hall, men stopped dancing and threw back their coats or dug frantically at their waistbands. But Alva somehow knew that they would be too late. The sinister thing in Duncan's hand had been leveled too long—was pointed too straight. Yet she also knew that the weapon was not pointed at the shrunken figure of the accuser, but at the man now half in front of Danny, trying to thrust him back. Just before the deafening roar of the revolver sounded, she heard an ear-piercing sound. Afterward, she learned that she had screamed.

There was no second shot. Only a rushing wave of men that broke a little over a body, and then rolled over the gunman and beat him savagely to the floor. Panting and yelling, they fought for holds on his arms and legs. Most of all, they clutched at the angrily fighting hand that waved the weapon dangerously about until a heavy boot stamped down on it with frightful force and crushed the revolver out of its grasp. Then they disentangled themselves, cursing fluently with relief, and left two of their number sitting on the prisoner, one of whom pulled a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and manacled the wrists that the other held up. Then the man who had had the handcuffs stood up and looked about him. It was Randall.

"Get back, everybody," Alva heard him say. "Clear the hall, boys. This will end the dancing. You're all safe, ladies. We're sorry we had to make such a muss."

He stooped over the smaller of the two men on the floor and spoke to him gently.

"Everything's all right now, Danny," he said, with a good-humored pat on the back. "We're much obliged to you. You'd better get up and dance."

But Danny did not look as if he had heard, and Danny did not get up, even though he might dance. Danny had "business to transact." The time had come for the Head Bookkeeper to cast up Danny's accounts and strike a final balance. And it was not Danny's little book that carried the last and greatest credit, nor any book in Magnet.

"*He jumped in front of me!*" Alva heard Randall crying, as he straightened up. His eyes swept the room until they found hers, and then seemed to plunge into them, stark with regret. "I was trying to hold him back, but he saw it coming, and took it for himself!"

He spoke out his defense to her over the heads of the crowd with as instinctive an appeal for belief as a husband's voice would have carried to his wife. It was as if she must know immediately exactly how it had happened.

For a moment his self-possession seemed to leave him, but the wild look left his face presently and his eyes grew calm again. As soon as they shifted from hers and the chain was broken, Alva realized all that her rashness this day had cost her. Sick at heart, she covered her face with her hands and sank back against the wall.

Feet were hurrying past her to the door in the wake of the grim group surrounding the prisoner, and she heard voices calling to her as the women scurried by in frightened haste, but all such sounds, as well as the hoarse shouts

ringing in the street, the rush of footsteps along the sidewalks, and the exclamations of the men as they turned over the body on the floor, were lost in the wave of misery that drowned her soul. After a long time, when the silence had forced itself on her, she took her hands from her eyes and saw Mrs. Baker sitting quietly beside her.

The older woman reached over and took an unresisting hand in a firm grip.

"Now, don't you go to feeling bad, Alva," she said. "You couldn't help it. Nobody could—not even Dick Randall, though he tried mighty hard at the last minute. If Danny hadn't made his break, they'd have taken him when they wanted him and not before."

Alva's face seemed set in stone. With staring, tearless eyes she looked straight before her.

"All that is of no consequence whatever," she said, in a dead voice. "I am disgraced!"

The Westerner stared for a moment, then frowned and gripped the limp hand tighter.

"Alva," she said cuttingly, "what makes you think you're so darn' much better than the rest of us out here? If you're disgraced, then so was I at Hackberry years ago, but I didn't lose much sleep over it, because nobody would have believed it. I advise you to get next to yourself, Alva. This isn't the ballroom of the Palace Hotel. This is a rough, hard place, where we do the best we can for our fun and get all out of life that's coming to us. Maybe we get smutted up a little, but we know we did it all for the best, and so it doesn't hurt us, after all.

"But the thing that *will* hurt you is your thinking you're so darned good that *now* you're done for, just because you talked for a while with some one who wasn't straight. My advice to you, Alva, is to get a good grip on yourself and go home to bed. The worst way you can put on airs around here is to

circulate the idea that you're disgraced."

In silent response, Alva gathered herself together and let the other woman lead her from the hall. More than ever a mockery in this hideous place, the cheap bunting draped around the unpainted joists and flaring lamps seemed a fitting index to the whole tawdry life, but for the saving clause that some one had taken down a section of the bright cheesecloth and laid it over Danny's body.

Within the ballroom the blood spots were bright on the shining floor, but outside, the clean, white stars were gleaming, and the great body of a night wind was pressing softly out of the vague waste. Never in her life before had air seemed so wildly sweet. She opened her mouth, like an exhausted runner, and drank it down with long, quivering breaths. She felt as if she had broken out of a foul, contaminating jail. The open space about her was like a great pool of water into which she could plunge and try to cleanse herself.

The two women stood close together for a moment, listening. Everywhere saloon doors were fanning and men were running and shouting through the warm darkness. A hundred yards away, a crowd bulked vaguely in the open street, but the murmur of only a single voice came to their ears. Presently there was a slow movement, and a dark mass of men, with their prisoner, faded silently out of the street and passed between the tents on to the open hillside to the west.

"I wonder what they're up to now," the Western woman muttered thoughtfully. "There ain't any jail, you know."

"I know," Alva answered, while a pang went through her at the thought of her foolish threat against Danny the day before.

As the two women watched and whispered, the crowd came to a halt. Some one in the group lit a lantern. A man's

figure showed motionless among the others shifting around the glow. Then a hand was laid on his shoulder, and he seemed to slide down to the ground, sitting stiffly upright as if he were leaning against something.

"They've handcuffed his hands behind him around a post!" Mrs. Baker whispered understandingly. "Dick Randall's discovery post!"

A cry of horror rose to Alva's lips. "In the graveyard?" she quavered, yet knew well enough where it was.

"Why not?" the other woman responded stonily. "Didn't he send Danny there? He'll be there himself to-morrow. Come, Alva. We've had enough."

Back in her tent alone, Alva lit the swinging lamp, only to put it out again immediately, and throw herself, face downward, on her bed without undressing. One after another the horrible day's happenings trooped through her mind like a set of motion pictures that would never stop unwinding until, at an hour long after midnight, she gave up all hope of calming herself, and lifted her hot head from the pillow.

Some time before, she had acquired the habit of raising the western wall of her tent so that she could look up the hillside toward her grave when she woke in the early morning, and now, as she stared out, she saw the tiny, yellow flame of a lantern flickering near the top of the hill.

The camp had grown strangely still. All the tents were dark, and the only sound that came to her ears was the mournful howl of a coyote trotting over the plain. The moon dropped down to the edge of the ragged sky line. Outlined against the bright disk she saw the motionless black figure of a man, sitting with his back against a post.

Little by little Alva rose from her bed. She was not conscious of forming any determination as she slipped under the canvas and stepped out into the

brush, or of arriving at her action by any particular process of reasoning. On the contrary, it was merely the old, grim resolve that drove her—the never-forgotten mainspring of purpose acting on the realization that to-morrow the man huddled there on the hillside in hideous silhouette would be as dead as Magnet and a rope could make him, and that, with his passing, her principal source of information would be gone beyond recall.

There was no more than this—no remembrance of Randall's warnings or weighing of his motives—not even a recollection of that crowded moment when his eyes had instinctively sought hers and the man had cried out his sorrow over Danny's sacrifice. Temporarily at least, all these things were forgotten, and the woman was walking silently but swiftly up the hill through the brush with her eyes fixed firmly on the figure and the light. Nearing the top of the hill, she turned off and walked over to where two men were seated on the ground, their revolvers lying between their feet, the lantern behind them. If she had been thinking of it, she would have been aware that they had been conscious of her approach for some time. Both the men rose as she came near, but remained silent.

"I should like to speak to him, if there are no objections," Alva said.

"We'll make it private for you, ma'am," they said, and moved away.

Alva went directly to the man at the post. It did not matter if he were asleep, because a long time ago—years, it seemed—she had known that she would wake him. But the man handcuffed to the post was not asleep—and he knew her.

"Duncan," said Alva, "do you know why I am in Magnet?"

The man barely lifted his dulled eyes, but she read his answer in a short movement of his head. She also saw that he knew what the morning would

bring. With the end so plainly in sight, he must surely speak the truth.

"I'm here to find the man who shot Donald Jaffray. I think you know, and I want you to tell me who it was."

The man made no reply for a time, but only wet his dried lips with his tongue and stared past her. When he spoke at last, it was with a counter question.

"You were talking with a man on the street to-day," he said, in a voice so dead that an icy hand seemed to reach in to her heart and close around it. "He told you not to go to the dance with me to-night. Am I right?"

"Yes," she answered. "But what has that to do with you or me?"

The man raised his head and gave her one full, searching look; then, although she could not see it, his eyes grew cold with the hate of a dying snake that knows the heel that crushed it.

"I'm surprised you didn't take his warning," he said. "But perhaps you know him like I do, and knew he would be figuring to make it look as if I'd killed young Jaffray, too. Dead men tell no tales, they say—so I'll tell 'em while I'm still alive. If you want Don Jaffray's murderer, you know where to find him!"

Alva said nothing. Her ears had heard and her mind had recorded his words, but she was conscious of neither exultation nor regret. She had simply discovered what her instinct had sent her to Magnet to discover long months ago. In fact, now that that part of it was over, the matter was put away for a time in the face of the more miserable present.

The silence lengthened. A puff of wind came up, then died away. The coyote whined for a second time across the waste. The moon sank down till only a silver edge showed above the black reef of the hill. The tents in the town below seemed like balls of phosph-

phorescent thistledown floating on a silver-gray, sea. Infinite miles away the bulk of the mountains, half seen, darkened the sky. Overhead, the stars began to glitter whitely for the last time.

Perhaps it was no narrow cell in which the man beside her was confined, and yet, to Alva, his was a far more dreadful prison. Illimitable distance seemed to spread out on every hand—long reaches down through the sage-sweet air to the dry lakes and deserts; north, south, east, and west—aye, and up to those crisp stars overhead—nothing but loneliness—infinity. In the half light of approaching dawn, the hilltop became a solitary peak from which the man looked out over the whole world—the world that he would have to give up when they spoke to him in the morning. It was only a little while, now. In an hour or two the sun would come up, and then—

A sound of voices came to her. Some one had come up through the brush, and was talking with the guards. She caught herself together with a shiver, looked, and saw the two and a taller man behind them watching her; then saw them turn away and fade into the darkness. A sense of her curious position in their eyes came to her, and she turned to hurry away. But the man raised his voice at the last moment.

"I'm all in," he said, with his chin sunk on his breast and his mouth gone slack. "My checks go back in the rack to-morrow for some other fellow to play the rotten game with later on. It's a funny thing—this life. I ain't ever been what you'd call a 'good' man, I reckon, but I never figured that I'd get *this* deal. And here you come into my life—from somewhere out there"—and he nodded his head at the dark mountains—"and you interfere with my play and I get careless, and before I know it—you—just a woman—a plain, ordinary woman that I never saw before, and don't care a snap of my finger about

—you give me the little push that sends me skyhooting down the trail to hell."

He paused for a moment, staring out over his wide, silent world; at the dark pools between the ranges where the valleys lay; then up at the crisp, white stars glittering down through the millions of miles of loneliness.

"It's getting cold," he said. "My *mind* is cold. I guess that where I'm going will be a terrible lonely place. Why don't they tell us it ain't a fellow's *body* that gets hurt when he settles up? It don't seem right to hide a fellow's bill till he goes to pay. I wonder if ever a parson saw what I am seeing now!"

Alva could stand no more.

"Good-by!" she said. "Thank you for telling me what I wanted to know."

She put out her hand in farewell, then realized the futility of it, and hurried away.

Behind her, the man handcuffed to the post broke out in a jeering laugh.

CHAPTER VIII.

The first thing Alva was conscious of next morning was that she was wide awake and standing in the middle of her tent. She did not know what had roused her so suddenly, but as she stood there she felt a galvanic movement go through the camp from end to end and grow with the sound of hurrying feet and slamming doors. Dressing hastily, she slipped into the street.

From every tent and bunk house men were coming—hatless and half dressed, their hair still matted over their eyes. All in a moment the signal had gone through Magnet, and, as Alva looked, the crowd around the Miners' Hall grew to hundreds. Even the women were astir, and Alva could see Mrs. Baker and her Mormon charges standing in front of the post office up the street. Near by, on the corner, the freckle-faced girl who slept in her cashier's cage in Bindelmann's store

made a stiff half gesture at her, only to drop her hand and clutch a green sweater jacket around her as she stared, white-faced, at the running, shouting men.

The group in front of the hall seemed composed of two bodies; an inner shell of men who stood still, and a vast fringe of newcomers who constantly circled around in an effort to find some one a head shorter than themselves. Finally all stood quiet while one man spoke. Then those on the side nearest Alva turned and began to walk toward her and the Bindelmann girl, whom she had joined on the store steps. They came directly on, the scattered, excited van—the close-walking, inner shell of men with the prisoner—the surging rabble alongside. Among them Alva saw the two guards of the night before and the black-bearded man, and at the prisoner's shoulder one other whose eyes looked full into hers and yet did not seem to see her. As they came on, she could hear the men around the prisoner talking among themselves:

"Fifty feet of half-inch will do."

"Make it three-quarters."

"Stop here till he gets it."

"Hustle along, Dan."

Before Alva and the girl could shrink back into the store, the crowd engulfed them. A man hurried into the store, taking out his pocketknife as he went, and calling out nervously for some one to wait on him. Pressed close together, the two women stared into each other's eyes and clutched hands.

"I can't do it," the girl whimpered. "Let him find it himself!" And soon, through the silence, came the "rap-rap" of hard new rope on the floor as it was pulled hastily from the reel.

Hardly six feet away from her, the prisoner stood motionless in the center of a sibilant, constantly moving crowd, that seemed all open mouths and fascinated, staring eyes. Alva stared with the others for a morbid moment, then

tore her eyes away and fastened them on the man beside the prisoner.

Two guilty men. One in handcuffs and one as free as air. One to go and one to stay. And he who had done the greater wrong was to be the other's executioner. Alva felt that there must be others in that encircling crowd who knew what she knew, and she wondered if they saw the hideous irony of it all. For one agonizing moment she felt an insane impulse to throw restraint to the winds and cry out at him—then Randall's gaze shifted to hers, and she lost courage.

His face was not set or even grim. Instead, it held a sanity that contrasted so sharply with her own suffocating emotions that she felt herself pulled down to earth again. In some inexplicable way, the thing about to take place immediately became a necessity, even though *he* was in control—even though he was cleverly making justice serve his own ends. Their eyes met once more—his cool and level, hers hot with resentment—and she thought she read in his face a realization of his great good fortune. Then the man with the rope came out of the store, and the crowd moved on.

As the mob streamed away, the man with the rope hurried ahead to a telegraph pole up the street, a loose end of the yellow hemp writhing like a bright serpent through the dust of the road. Here he carefully estimated the distance to the crossbar and tossed the rope over the arm with a cow-puncher's sure aim. Unable to bear any more, Alva put her arm around the Bindelmann girl's shoulder and led her inside the store.

Five minutes later, she interrupted the girl's soft moaning into a pink-and-green comforter that lay on the counter:

"The men are coming back. I think it's over."

"Don't leave me," implored the girl, from the depths of the comforter. "Did

you see the awful look on his face when they took him away? I won't sleep for a week. Isn't this a simply terrible place!"

"It's no place for you, dear," Alva answered. "Make your father send you away."

"I guess he'll have to. I ain't very used to hangings," the girl replied.

When Alva went out on the street again, she found it dotted everywhere with men in twos and threes, although a good-sized group still stood at the foot of the pole. Near her, Randall and two others stood with their backs turned on the scene.

As Alva hesitated, wondering if he would have the hardihood to speak to her as he had done the day before, her attention was drawn to a man who hurried out of a tent with a square black box under his arm. This man ran across the street and spoke to the group around the pole. To Alva's surprise, she saw that the rope had not yet been taken down, and, as she looked, several men came out of the circle with an end in their hands and began to pull. While she wondered what it all meant, the man from the tent stepped back a few feet into the road and leveled his box at something at the end of the rope, which was rising, straight and stiff, out of the center of the crowd. A cry of horror leaped from her lips. They were drawing the dead man up again to take his photograph!

No sooner had she cried out than she felt the rush of several men past her—Randall in front, his eyes blazing, his face convulsed with anger. Another moment, and the camera was beaten out of the photographer's hands, and the three had charged headlong into the men at the end of the rope.

As if by magic, the saloons and tents emptied again into the street. The mob took form once more, no longer wordless and grim, but this time an angry, swearing rabble, that jostled and kicked

and struck. A roar of voices went up and did not subside even when the three had cut their way savagely into the crowd and taken possession of the body. Then Randall's voice rang out high above the bellowing profanity.

"Go on! Keep right ahead!" he roared, shaking his fist in their faces. "Disgrace the camp just as far as you can! Make us the mark for every newspaper in the whole country! Even then you won't be playing as mean a trick as you were playing on this fellow here!"

A growl and a curse answered him. A fist shot out and brushed his cheek. Alva, several yards away, could hear the clean smack of Randall's blow as he planted his counter squarely in the other's face. There was a surging to and fro inside the crowd for a moment—then suddenly the attacker popped into view like a pea shelled out of a pod, and sprawled headlong on the ground. Scrambling to his feet, he made a belligerent show of taking off his coat to plunge in again, but the ridiculous figure he cut appealed to the crowd's sense of humor, and a gale of laughter was his only answer.

The crowd began to scatter for a second time, and Alva turned away toward her tent. It was the first time she had seen this man, or any man, so furiously angry, and, in spite of everything, she thrilled at the thought of how forcefully he had backed up his rebuke. As she passed down the street with a pale, thoughtful face, she was wondering what manner of man was this who would first hang a criminal and then imperil his own life to save the body from insult.

It was only nine o'clock when the last breakfast dish had been dried and relaid on the table, and Alva became conscious that she had been working with feverish rapidity. In spite of her share in the tragedy, her presence in the dining room had not brought forth a

word of either criticism or sympathy. Even the black-bearded man had failed to do more than recognize her, and then proceed with his silent meal. Evidently Mrs. Baker had been right.

But in spite of the calm that had come over the camp, something still seemed impending, or else it was the ceaseless throbbing of her tortured nerves. Only nine o'clock, and yet it seemed as if a whole year's activities had been crowded into the past twelve hours. Alva's head began to ache, and she sank down in a chair near the kitchen door.

After a time she heard a step. Raising her head with an effort, she saw the red-haired woman known as "Tiger Lil" regarding her thoughtfully.

"You look all in," the woman said.

Alva nodded, and tried to smile. Somehow, since last night the gulf between them seemed a fraction less great.

The woman questioned her mutely, then seated herself on the doorstep. She, too, seemed very tired, but Alva read the story of heavy drinking in her constantly twitching movements and bloodshot eyes.

The woman leaned her chin on her hand and stared out over the desert, glittering in the heat.

"I'm thinking about Danny," she said. "It's about time they did something for him."

Alva wondered for a moment, then sat up in her chair.

"Isn't he buried yet?" she asked, in a shocked voice.

"He is *not*," was the answer. "And, what's more, I don't know who's going to do it, either. The committee is having a meeting, and none of the other men will bother about him, they say. Probably they'll let it go till they get good and ready—then dump him in."

Alva paled.

"He was pretty good to me," went on the woman. "He did lots of odd jobs

for me—just why I don't know. He didn't have many friends while he was here, the poor, old bum, and now it don't look like he had *any*. Nor even—nor even a decent suit of clothes for the grave." She stared moodily out over the heat-hazed plain, and her brows came together in a sullen frown. "He's going to lie there a long time," she said heavily. "It isn't *right*."

Alva's dark eyes grew darker and larger. She stood up. "Let us two go and make him ready for burial," she said.

And so, in a coat room in the rear of the Miners' Hall, where the body had lain all night covered over with a sheet of tar paper, the woman from the East and the woman from Nowhere labored together in that Christian service which woman's compassion has impelled her to perform since the dawn of civilization—and before it.

"Danny never was what you'd call a 'swell dresser,'" the red-haired woman murmured, with a wry face, as she held up a tattered vest. "This would have been good for just about one day more."

A battered notebook tumbled from a pocket to the floor. The woman took it up and scanned its pages curiously. After a time she raised her eyes, without lifting her head, and looked stealthily across the body at Alva. When she felt sure that her action had not been noticed, she slipped the notebook into her dress and dropped her eyes to the tattered vest again. And their swift drooping hid the light of a great secret discovered.

"I'll see if I can beg some clothes from the saloons," she said presently. "I'll speak to Andy, too, and have him make a coffin, and send word to Randall about digging a grave." Then the knowledge of what the notebook inside her waist contained led her to try a significant remark: "Randall ought to be good at graves by this time. They say

he's helped make people *ready* for 'em before."

A sudden flash lighted up Alva's face. The red-haired woman thought it was anger, and turned away before anything could be said, a faint smile curling her already curled lips.

Later in the morning, Andy, the carpenter, grave-faced for once, came and took his measurements and departed again, after expressing himself vividly as to the committee's laxity, and after a time the red-haired woman returned, bringing a suit of clothes and a clean shirt. During the remainder of their task, Alva felt more than ever depressed, for the securing of Danny's clothes had been conducted under alcoholic stimulus.

"Funeral's at four o'clock," the woman said thickly when they parted. "They're going to send a couple of miners to dig a grave, but we'll have to get Andy's wagon ourselves, I guess. But we'll bury him good and proper, won't we, sis?"

"We'll do our best," Alva answered wearily; and then, with a cry of despair: "I wonder if there's another place in all the world like this!"

Shortly before the funeral, Mrs. Baker, who had bundled her Mormon friends off on the afternoon stage, came and reproached her.

"You're certainly terrible one-ideaed nowadays, Alva," she said. "You don't seem to look around for anything any more. You just plunge right ahead as if something was chasing you. People don't ever have to do these things *alone*. Why didn't you let me help?"

"I wasn't alone," Alva answered, and the soft light in her eyes showed a saddened understanding and a new tolerance. "Tiger Lil was the one who thought of it. I was only her helper, Amelia."

Four o'clock came, and the wagon from the lumber yard pulled up at the back door of the hall. The red-haired

woman looked down from her seat on the box beside the silent Andy.

"They're coming now to load him in, and some are coming to the burying, too. I roasted 'em to a finish down at the Green Front and the Red Onion," she added exultantly. "I guess they know now how we women feel about a decent burial. Has anybody got a Bible, or anything?"

Alva looked hopefully at Mrs. Baker. "Well, now, I kinda think I *have*," that lady murmured thoughtfully. "I believe I saw something religious sticking around in the office only yesterday. You folks hustle along and I'll run home and look. But don't you go to burying too fast."

With the rough pine box lifted into the wagon, Alva and the red-haired woman walked up the hill together toward the graveyard. Some distance in their rear a dozen men followed in casual fashion through the sagebrush, as if they would finally arrive at the funeral quite by accident.

The other woman looked back several times as they went on, and, when she spoke, Alva seemed to know what would be said.

"Randall will be there, anyhow," the woman remarked, in pleased tones. "He promised he'd come, and that means he *will*. He coming off shift now—I can see him on the trail. I hope there's singing, don't you?" she added hopefully. "Anyway, just *one* song wouldn't hurt."

As they neared the cemetery, they heard the sound of hammer on steel, and saw two miners at work.

"Better not come much closter with that young mare of yours, Andy," they called.

"What's the grief?" asked Andy, undisturbed, and set his brake.

"We've struck some of this d——d hardpan about two foot down, that's what's the matter. Danny won't have any more grave than a jack rabbit if

we don't loosen her up with a little black powder. Hang on to your horse, Andy. Bill will be spitting his fuse soon."

As they waited, waist-deep in the brush, the men behind came up and stood in an appreciative semicircle, seizing the opportunity to roll a cigarette and criticize the miners' judgment with gentle humor. Overhead, the sun blazed like the mouth of a furnace. Around them, the fine desert dust rose up in a sage-embittered cloud that seemed both to choke and cut.

One of the miners sat half in the grave, holding a drill on which the other swung down with a practiced hand. Blow after blow came down in machine-like rotation until Alva felt like throwing up her hands and shrieking. A moment to load the shallow hole and light the fuse, and the two men came back, not without caustic remarks as to the hardness of the ground.

Boom! A gentle rain of dirt fell around—Andy's mare danced—the men walked forward and critically inspected the hole—the women followed, and the burial began.

While the coffin was being lowered into the grave, Alva's eyes sought those around her. At the end farthest from her, Randall stood, hat in hand and silent. He looked grim and very tired. If his eyes were on her at any time, she did not notice it, for he seemed to be only staring down at the yellow box. If he were thinking of Danny, she thought, he must be realizing that in his time of peril he had found, as one always finds, the least expected friend.

They looked around at one another—miners, gamblers, vagrants, clerks from the stores, the three women—and there was a question in their eyes. Then Mrs. Baker came to the front.

"We ought to say something about this poor fellow, I reckon," she said, in a faintly quavering voice, "and, being it's Sunday, anyway, I'd like to read

this yere Sunday-school leaflet that I located up to the shack. But I dunno. It's all about the children of Israel adventuring round in a desert like this one here, when it was awful hot and dry and sandy; and because they grumbled some, God sent a lot of serpents to bite 'em. Probably that's meant paragonically, and shouldn't be took too much in earnest, because we know very well that God wouldn't do any such mean trick *nowadays*. But it all goes to show that we ain't the only ones playing in hard luck in deserts, and it don't do for even a fellow like Danny to grumble. I don't say we'd get snakes set onto us if we did, but I guess Danny saw quite a few in his time, and if he was here, he'd tell us to be more careful. That's all. I'd read the leaflet through, only we couldn't answer the questions on the back, and it ain't the second Sunday after Epiphany, anyhow."

When Mrs. Baker had ended, much to her relief and Alva's, Randall seemed to rouse himself from his brown study. The man's eyes grew strong and clear, and seemed to take in the whole group.

"It isn't up to any of us to preach a sermon," he said, "but I guess most of us believe in God and the square deal, and will agree that it's a good thing to come here and do the right thing when a man is passing out.

"As everybody knows, this man Danny was pretty unfortunate. He had a bad appetite and a poor sort of a body to justify any kind of an appetite, and a week-kneed mind to control both of them. Just to make things worse, he hadn't any friends. Probably a man like that looks to be in a bad way.

"But a man often has friends scattered around that he hasn't been counting on. This man was *my* friend, although I didn't know it at the time. It makes me wish mighty hard that I'd been a better friend to *him*.

"Now, as I said, Danny wasn't what

we'd call an awful lot as we figure it, out here, but still there was *something* about him that brought us all out here to say 'good-by,' and that is what is going to do us good. If Danny didn't have any friends yesterday and yet has all these to-day, we can all be mighty sure that there's a chance for all of us, no matter who we are, or how mean and yellow we've seemed to others. We've always got a friend."

The red-haired woman's hand tightened convulsively on Alva's.

"He's right! He's right!" she whispered, while her eyes stared out at what Alva hoped was the truth at last. "Everybody's got a chance—if they'll only take it. O-h-h-h! I want to *sing*!"

"Sing!" Alva said to Mrs. Baker.

As if she were some kind of a mechanical doll that responded to the touch, Mrs. Baker's lips parted, and the first words of a hymn that all civilization knows came forth in a throaty tremolo. By the time the second line was reached, Alva was singing with her, while a faint accompanying murmur began behind them. But Alva soon found her own voice lowering, while she listened to a clearer, stronger voice beside her.

From Nome to the Needles and from Grass Valley to Cripple Creek there is a voice that rises above the uproar of the saloon both by day and by night—one sound that seems forever ringing out above the ceaseless roll of the roulette ball and the bellowing at the bar. Though other sounds may come to deaden it—laughter, the grind of boots, the muttered beginnings of a quarrel, a curse, a blow, a fall—yet before the roar of the boom-camp night rolls up again, there always comes the sound of a woman singing, and the wild strain mocks at life and death as well.

But the voice beside Alva took only a note or two before it shook itself free from the twang of the halls and gushed forth in uncontaminated beauty. Higher

and higher it soared, like a free-winged bird in flight, until the others grew silent and only one voice was left to sing Danny's funeral hymn. And as the wonderful sounds came forth from the woman's throat, Alva followed her eyes and saw why she had wanted to sing. Once more the verse began, and this time with a strain so poignant that the man's heavy eyelids rose, and she saw that he, also, knew.

Alva felt a sharp pang go through her. In spite of their surroundings, her eyes were instantly riveted on the two, searching, questioning, testing. But even her oversuspicious eyes could read nothing in the man's face except a sort of ashamed understanding. Then his look shifted to Alva, and he reddened, for he was seeing her for the first time.

The voice beside her quavered and faltered. Little by little the sweetness died out of its tones. There was volume and clearness still, but that was all. But the woman still sang on, for the blessed knowledge she had gained to-day would be hers always. There would be a chance for every one, some day.

There was a silence, followed by the rattle of earth on the box, and then the group broke up, spreading out in various directions toward the town. The red-haired woman walked among the first, head down and thoughtful. Alva made haste to overtake her, but soon saw that several men were following, and so drew back. For a time it seemed as if something in the red-haired woman's manner held them off. Then she threw back her head with a wild laugh and the men took heart. When Alva raised her eyes again from the ground, Randall was walking beside her.

In all the days since Alva Leigh had first determined to discover Donald Jaffray's murderer, she had never felt so lacking in power of judgment. One after another the events of the past twenty-four hours flashed through her

mind, and yet, when all had passed, she found herself looking silently, helplessly up into his eyes, and wondering if she would ever know the truth.

The man was very grave. Alva knew that he was about to speak to her about himself. The tightened look around his lips told her that a definite understanding was not far off.

"I want to tell you that it was mighty fine of you to look after Danny," he said. "But I've always known that you'd do that sort of thing."

"How did you know it?" she asked dispassionately.

"Because you're that kind of a woman," he answered simply. "You're a woman with strong likes and hates. You're a woman with a *foundation*. When a thing is right for you to do, you do it, no matter how much it hurts. Of course, you might hurt other people while you were doing it, but because you are that kind of a woman, you'd go just as far the other way to help them as soon as you found that you were wrong. You're a woman whose mind deals in big things *first*, and you'd go through hell fire to do them."

"You're wonderfully clear-sighted," she said, with cold irony. "Suppose we drop the subject."

"Yes. We'll drop it now," he answered. "Because I've something to say to you."

Alva stopped short at the door of her tent and faced him squarely. Was he going to be so utterly foolish as to ask her to marry him?

"*We've found the Gun Sight Mine!*" he said. "*I'm pulling out in the morning!*"

Alva's face fell. She stepped back, with a gasp.

"In the *morning!*" she repeated.

"As early as I can. There are some things here that I must clear up first. To-morrow noon I'll be at Furnace Creek. Probably I'll be halfway across the valley by evening."

He waited a moment longer, for he saw that she was upset—then came close to her and took her hand in his, although he did not raise it from her side.

"Alva," he said gently, "the time has come, now. You're the woman I want. I must go away to-morrow, and it may be weeks or months before I'm back, and so I want you to know that you're the only woman that I've ever wanted as soon as I saw her—and before that. You're the woman who can have every bit of me from now until I die.

"I've tried hard to keep from telling you, because I wanted to wait until I made my big stake, but I couldn't stand it. And I guess the love I have for you isn't such a puny thing but what it will bear a little talking about.

"We aren't boy and girl, you and I. Folks have said at times that I seemed like I was full grown, but there never has been any doubt about *you*. You're a real woman—a big, strong, lovable woman, without any foolishness, and if you'll let me come into your life, I'll promise not to make it any smaller than I can help. I've known just exactly what you were like ever since—"

"Since when?" she asked, without loosening her hand or raising her eyes.

"Since I first saw your face," he answered, with a quiver in his voice. "Do you remember the night when I found you on the desert?"

She moved her head in silent assent, and still did not take her hand away.

"I saw then that my work was cut out for me," he said. "But I was glad of it. For you're enough to make a man work harder than he ever worked before—and enough to keep him straighter."

"Yes," she said, with a colorless intonation.

"Yes, Alva, that's so," he responded, with a sharp breath, for he saw that his work was still laid out for him. "And I've done it. But I'm not wanting to

talk to you about myself. All I want to tell you is what I hope to do with my life for you, and why I'm going to do it.

"I'm wanting to give you everything I can get. I want you to go along in life with me and grow so fast and so fine that no one can touch you. You've got it in you to be a big, fine woman. You're that now—in Magnet—but I'm talking about anywhere in the world that we might ever go. I'd love you, *anyway*, as much as a woman *could* be loved, I reckon, but I'll be loving you even more, *then*. It isn't going to take anything more than happiness to make you the finest woman in all outdoors—and if you'll love me for thinking so, and working all the time to make you more so, that will be all I'll want."

He paused for a moment, and then spoke even more gently and humbly than before:

"Have you anything to say to me, Alva?"

Gradually the woman drew away and gathered herself together. There are times in life when the innumerable things that do not matter fall away like a cast-off garment, and only the essentials remain. This was one of those infrequent moments, and the weight of that knowledge lay heavy and forceful in the woman's somber eyes. Most of all, it affected her voice, toning it down to a deep note that told him, with her first words, that his fate would be decided for all time then and there.

Yet there was one thing that gave him hope, even if his case should, seemingly, be lost. She was *too* somber. The moment had become too gravid with fate. There was something wrong—as he had known before.

She took a full breath and faced him.

"Mr. Randall," she said steadily, "you're asking me to do something that is absolutely impossible. I know that you mean all you say, and so I tell you, with the same frankness, that I can't share your feelings.

"Apart from everything else, my reason is that I can't understand you. Either you're a good man, or a very wicked one. If I were sure which you were, I'd tell you so immediately. Since I've come to Magnet, you've done a great many kind things for me—things that only a fine, strong, splendid man would do—as you did them. On the other hand, you have, apparently, done other things in your life that even a devil wouldn't do."

"A devil!" he murmured, astounded. The look he shot at her was almost one of fright.

"Perhaps there are reasons why I should want to know precisely what you are, and perhaps, after all, it makes no difference. You say you're going away in the morning. This much I will tell you, then: You won't find me here when you return.

"You've come into my life just as I would have the man I might love come into it—fearless, strong, and tender. You go out of my life just as fearless and strong, because that much I see in you; but as far as the rest of you is concerned, you're a mystery.

"I remember that first night on the desert as well as you do. I knew then that you'd either be my friend or some one whom I would never want to see again. If I only knew which one it would finally prove to be—if *proof there is*—and her eyes suddenly blazed into his—"you may rest assured that I would tell you."

"I know that," he answered calmly, though a little pale. "That's why I tell you that I love you—because you're that kind. I'm glad you think I've helped you a little. You've helped me a great deal more than that. But I can't follow you when you say that it's I, perhaps, that has hurt you. Furthermore, *I'm not going to ask you what it is you think*. I tell you again that I love you, and you must take me or leave me on what I am. I may have a de-

fense, and I may not—it makes no difference. You'll not know it from *me!*"

Alva never took her eyes off his.

"You take a high ground," she said haughtily. "Also, you presuppose that I love you. You're wrong. I care nothing for you. I care for only one thing."

"And I," he answered. "My self-respect."

Alva's eyes wavered.

"Why are we talking?" she asked wearily. "What can you gain?"

"Your remembrance of what I've said," he answered very gently. "Because these beliefs of yours about me will pass away. When that day comes, I want my love for you to be standing there, waiting: I'll have to stick it out till then, I guess—but it'll be worth while."

"I'll be going in the morning before you're up. It may be a long time before I see you again—between where I *have* to go and where you *can* go—but that doesn't worry me much. No matter where you go from here, I'll find you."

"You will not," she stated, as cold as a stone.

"*I will,*" came back the answer. "*Because you will help me do it.*"

Alva felt a suffocation rising in her throat. The irresistible forcefulness of his tones beat on her mind, and robbed her of her power to think. She wished, frantically, that he would go away, or cease talking, or that she could stop the endless whirling of her mind, or crush him with some unanswerable retort. But none of these things happened, and she felt her grip on herself swiftly loosening.

Suddenly, in the midst of her weakness, a reviving thought came to her.

"When do you go?" she asked hurriedly, and resolved to bring things to a head that very night. If there were time enough, luck might be with her yet.

His hand strayed toward his watch. He took it from his pocket and held it, unopened, in his hand, while his lips moved in a silent calculation as to what he must do before the hour of his departure.

"I've got to clean up some business at the local office, and get my stuff together. That'll make it about three in the morning. Packing the burros and all that will take an hour more. Probably I'll pull out about sunup."

He turned, at a faint breath-catching sound, and saw her grow ghastly white. Her eyes were fixed on the heavy-cased gold watch in his hand, and she was swaying to and fro, her throat choking with unintelligible attempts to speak. Then she fainted dead away in his arms.

It was a moment or two before the man realized what had happened, and for a little while he held her clutched in his arms, frightened by the silent, white face crushed against his breast. To any one passing at the time, it would have seemed the perfect moment of love's confession.

And, as it happened, some one did see them and misread them in that very way, and stood there in the sagebrush at the corner of the tent with her washed-out blue eyes dark with hate. Then, having seen at last what her growing despair had told her would surely come to pass, the red-haired woman reeled away with a baleful face to the hell from which she had come.

When Alva came to her senses, she was on her bed in her tent, with Mrs. Baker's anxious face bending over her.

"It's all right now, Alvie, dear," the woman was saying. "Just you lie quiet and pull yourself together. You fainted, that's all," she went on, in response to the query in Alva's eyes. "Dick Randall brought you in here and sent for me. He was the scariest white man I ever saw."

Alva lay still, striving to collect her thoughts. Why had she fainted? She knew she had been frightfully tired and nervous, but that condition alone could never account for such a sudden collapse. As if in corroboration, her gropings encountered the vague bulk of a remembrance which, she felt, must contain the real reason—if she could only make it take form.

As the older woman sat down on the edge of the bed and began to stroke her hand, Alva suddenly turned her face down in the pillow with a moan. She had remembered. The watch she had seen in his hand! The monogrammed watch she had given Donald years before!

"What is the matter, dearie?" the other woman cried, appalled. "Tell me your trouble, Alva. You've been carrying this thing that bothers you too long!" She hesitated, then leaned over the face hidden deep in the pillow. "I know he's going far away," she whispered kindly. "Don't be afraid to tell me how you feel. Maybe I can set it right. Men are such *blissing* fools!"

Alva stiffened all through her body. Then, as her disgust served to help her collect herself, she raised her head and sat up, with a look of utter finality on her face.

"Amelia," she said carefully, for even that faithful friend must never know her secret, "if you have any idea that there is anything between that man and myself, I ask you to put it out of your mind. When I came to this place, it was not in search of a business in which to make money or even to look for a husband. You've never asked me why I came, and I'm glad you didn't, because I like you too well to tell you an untruth. As things are now, it's possible that I may have to go away from Magnet just as I came—without saying why. But I want you to remember all your life that there is some one who thanks you from the bottom of her heart for all that you

did for her, without asking the questions that you might have asked."

"Why—I never did anything, Alvie," the other wailed. "All I wanted was to see you settle down right with a good man for a husband. And I kinda thought, you know——"

"Please don't, Amelia. It won't help things one bit. I shall never marry any one."

"But you meant to, once, didn't you?" persisted Mrs. Baker, with gentle objection. "I don't see how you knew about Magnet if you didn't know some man out here. And if the man wrote you letters back East, why, then, you must have been thinking of him that way."

Alva stared. How did Mrs. Baker know that any one had written letters to her from Magnet?

"You say I've done a lot for you, dearie," the older woman went on, in a voice that trembled on the verge of tears, "but I dunno, after all. Mebbe I've mullixed things up worse than ever I thought. There ain't a whole lot for a woman to do out here, and when you came, I hoped you'd let me have a little private excitement, marrying you off to some nice man."

The woman's eyes fell before Alva's puzzled look, and her hand picked at the bedclothes. Her face took on a strange abjectness.

"I shouldn't have did it, I know—but I did want to see you marry Randall, and so a while back I played a mean trick on you. Maybe it was worse than mean—I never stopped to think. But you're so terrible in earnest about everything that I can see now that perhaps—perhaps I made an *awful* mistake."

The woman broke off and began to whimper.

"I did something pretty bad, I guess. I could go right smack into jail for it, Baker says—only—I've still got the letter!"

"What letter?" cried Alva.

"A letter a man wrote you long ago from here," Mrs. Baker wailed. "Way last winter—a month before you came. It got postmarked, all right, and then it must have slipped down between the end of the flooring and the wall up to the post office, becuz when I went to clean out a family of more than twenty trade rats under the floor last May, I found it there. I should have given it to you then"—she sobbed, while hot tears of remorse rolled down her plump cheeks—"but I figured it was from some fellow that had gone away, and I didn't want him to find you again. Oh, I can see now that I made a terrible mistake! I see now that I shouldn't have did it, becuz that's what you came here for, all right—and there I went and interfered. As soon as I saw there was no friend of yours here, I thought—I thought it wouldn't make any difference—so long as he'd gone away. And now—and now maybe he's gone for good, and you won't ever see him any more."

Listening to this strange story, Alva felt herself undergoing a great change. Things began to quiet down inside her. She knew instinctively who had written the letter, and, since it was still in existence, she had time to pity the other's grief and shame.

"Amelia," she said, while her softened eyes glowed with love for her well-meaning friend, "it's quite true that I'll never again see the man who wrote that letter, but even if you'd given it to me five minutes after it was found, I doubt if it would have made any difference."

"O-h-h-h! Thank Heaven!" sobbed the other. "But you can tell everybody right out what I did, if you want. I'd just as *lieve* go to jail, you know."

"No," answered Alva, while she helped dry the tears. "You were just as honest then as you are now. You were trying to help me, Amelia—so it doesn't matter. Have you the letter?"

Mrs. Baker hunted lachrymosely for her pocket.

"After I give it to you, I'm going right straight home," she said. "It don't seem like I could ever look you in the face again. I keep thinking about that poor fellow that might have needed you all this time. Anyhow, I can say for Randall that *he* didn't know. He'd have made me give it right up."

"I'm not so sure," was the reply that followed Mrs. Baker to the door.

At nine o'clock that night, when everything had been cleared away, Alva locked her doors and sat down to read her letter.

For a long time she held it, unopened, in her lap, studying the postmark and the address. His last letter—written February 1st—nine days before he was shot! What might it not contain? The one previous to this had been written several months before, and had spoken only briefly about his claim and his new hopes. What would she find in this? Would it be like the dear letters of earlier years, page on page of love and living optimism? Would it show him trembling on the verge of success? Would it bring her the one thing for which, even now, she would give anything she possessed—the command to come and join him? She thought, as she tore the letter open, that life would be almost bright again if she could find merely that one word—"Come!" As she raised the first sheet to read, her trust was diminished in no way by the fact that the letter had been written in an almost undecipherable scrawl.

MY DEAREST GIRL: I wrote you some time ago telling you that I had made a big copper find out here. I hoped then that everything would soon be all right for you to come on. But things have turned against me. I don't know just how I am going to come out.

Alva frowned, and read the paragraph again. It was Donald's letter, but neither the writing nor the tone seemed

quite like Donald's. And the words seemed very oddly sprawled across the page.

As I say, I have had hard luck here. I thought that this place would surely see me turning the trick, but it doesn't look that way now. Everything seems against me. I never saw its equal.

I don't know what you will think of this, but if we can't get the money together, I don't know what we are going to do. You may think that this is pretty rough on you, but it really isn't my fault. I had a good claim out here until a man got it away from me—a claim I could have sold for thirty thousand dollars. But this man—I'll get him or he'll get me, some day—did me out of it, and now I'm up against it again.

Perhaps this is the last letter I shall ever write you. Frankly, I don't think there is any good in our writing to each other any longer. We'll just have to—

Alva reached the bottom of the second sheet, and turned it over, trembling, to continue her struggle with the frightful sentences which steadily grew less legible.

There was nothing written on the other side.

For a moment she looked about to assure herself that she had dropped no part of the letter on the floor—then, little by little, she came to a realization of the awful truth:

The last page had not been inclosed!

The woman's face grew haggard. It would not have been possible to strike her a harder blow. Careless as Donald had always been, his last neglect became a tragedy.

And yet, as she stared, unseeing, at the blank wall of her tent, the true meaning of the letter came home to her. Her fine, strong, fearless boy—the boy who would go anywhere, fight anything—had finally lost his grip. In a last agony of contrition, he had been trying to give her up as one of whom he was no longer worthy. He had tried too hard—had worked too long. And at last, when he was tired out and sore and discouraged, a shrewder, stronger man had beaten him.

She turned back to the sentence that had burned itself into her memory—"I'll get him, or he'll get me, some day."

So it was true, after all—what the man Duncan had said. *Everything* was true—all that her woman's instinct had told her, beginning with his lie months ago about the mark on her baggage; it was true that he had tricked the claim away from Donald—true that he had had him put away—true, all true—as true as the fact that he had even had the hardihood to wear as his own the love token she had given Donald.

Alva laid the letter aside and rose up to walk the floor. Long ago the proofs had accumulated, one after another, and now it was no longer worth while to consider them. All that had ended with Donald's letter. And to-morrow the man would be gone out of her reach across Death Valley—perhaps forever.

With hands clenched tightly behind her, the woman walked her tent hour after hour. Sometimes she paused by her bedside to kneel down and pray; sometimes she sank into her chair, exhausted by her endless pacing, and sat motionless for half an hour, struggling between despair and that grim force that still drove her mind to studying out some way of arriving at her ends. Midnight came and passed and she still sat or walked about in the darkness. At four in the morning she pushed the flap of her tent to one side and looked out.

Dawn was at hand, for the highest of the western peaks was tipped with fire, but all the valleys were still filled with great pools of mist, and the gray half light made a grotesque world seem still more grotesque and unreal. The camp was quiet, the only sound coming from a pair of mouse-colored burros near by in the sage. She looked again and knew whose they were, for they were packed and ready for the trail. As they moved vaguely here and there, she caught the faint clink of some metal articles fastened to the *aparejos*—a cof-

feepot and a pan striking against the top of a burlap-wound canteen. Presently the burros saw her, and, raising their moist noses from the ground, came up in ghostly single file, seeking food. When a few feet away, the foremost animal stopped, looked hopefully at her, then dropped his nose to the ground and sidled away. The canteen, swung loosely from one corner of the pack, slid forward. Something clinked again. As she listened, she heard footsteps retreating up the street, and presently, far off, the sound of a door closing in the Miners' Hall.

And then in that unreal light and in that hideous, unreal place where only wickedness seemed actual fact, her way was made clear to her at last. She would take the law into her own hands!

Quick as a flash, but as silent as a shadow, she slipped into her kitchen and plucked the sharp-pointed can opener from its nail on the wall. Another swift, noiseless rush and she was beside the slow-moving burros. As she had expected, the canteens were full and dripping, for he had submerged them in the tank when he had filled them. She did not trouble to look around to see if any one were watching, for the same curious impulse was driving her that had had her in its clutches the night before. Instinctively and entirely without fear, she was about to do the one necessary thing—the only thing left for her to do.

He would need no water until after he had passed Furnace Creek on his way across the valley. He had said, she remembered, that he could make Bennett's Wells on two canteens. Probably he would travel until late that night and camp on the floor of the valley, far from the small stream at Furnace Creek and farther still from Bennett's Wells. If she knew him at all, he would not think of turning back, but would try, somehow, to reach the Wells, *even though the water in his canteens had*

leaked away. As to what would ultimately happen down there in the valley, she had no doubt whatever. For once in her life she thanked God that the man was physically brave, for his fearlessness would be his undoing.

Alva felt with the point of the can opener until she knew it had pierced the burlap and was resting against the bottom of the canteen. A sharp blow with the palm of her hand and the steel went through. She waited a moment to feel a tiny stream well out against her finger, then punctured the other canteen in the same way. If he traveled fast, his animals would be kept ten yards or more ahead of him, far enough for the slow dripping to escape his eye. Drop by drop the precious water would seep through the coverings and evaporate, or fall on the hot ground in pellets of dust, curl up, and be lost. Alva went back to her tent, closed and locked the doors, and sat down to wait for daylight. At the very last moment she had found a way to vengeance—and the outcome was absolutely certain.

And as she sat there, she found that she was no longer restless or sick at heart. Her sense of relief was so great that it seemed as if she had had a burning fever for months past and it had broken all in a moment, or as if a frightful headache had passed away. Her task was over and done with, and her mind was once more as clear as a bell.

She did not even meditate on the frightful end that was to come to him down there in the yellow sink whose terrors he knew so well, because that was what she had come to Magnet to accomplish. The tortures that he would pass through did not interest her. Others had been tortured, too, and, what was worse, had had to live. Torture itself was nothing, for its memory would pass out of existence with life. Let him be tortured. Who cared?

The burros nosed about in the brush

for half an hour—dawn streaked the east—the light grew stronger. She heard the door up the street close again. She went to her own door, made sure it was fastened securely, came back to her chair, and sat down.

Footsteps came near, and she knew from the snap of taut ropes that he was trying the pack reatas for tightness. Then came the repeated clink of metal as the burros were headed up the basin toward Furnace Creek and prodded into a reluctant trot. Alva softly exhaled the deep breath she had been holding—then caught herself, and sat bolt upright.

He was standing outside her door!

"Alva," he said, in a gentle voice that could reach no ear but hers, "I've come to say 'good-by.' Won't you wish me luck, little woman?"

Alva's heart seemed to stop beating.

He waited a moment for her answer.

"I'll not be back soon," he said, with the old, heart-searching note in his voice that once had so nearly deceived her. "I know you're up and around, because I heard you. It's a hard job I've tackled—but you know who it's for this time, as well as I. I'm wishing you'd tell a fellow 'good-by.'"

The woman sat rigid in her chair, her face convulsed. As if there were nothing between them, she could see him standing there without, listening and waiting, the kind eyes pleading with her gently, a strong brown hand raised to hide the sensitive lips that quivered with feeling. She prayed to Heaven for the moment to pass. She had not looked for this. If *only* that pleading voice would cease!

"If you'd open the door," he said, "I have something that belongs to you. I've kept it too long—but you'd excuse the reason. If you'll not say good-by, then I want it no longer."

Alva clenched her hands to keep from shrieking.

"Dear God," she whispered, on her knees, "God in heaven—take him—oh, take him away!"

"Well," he said, at last, "I guess it's over. I'd have done anything in the whole wide world for you, Alva, but if you can't see me as I am, then it's better that I stop trying to make you see. I've gone as far as I can go. Good-by."

And he was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

At nine o'clock that morning Alva walked into Mrs. Baker's living room at the post office.

"Amelia," she said decisively, "I'm leaving Magnet on this afternoon's stage. Do you want to take the boarding house?"

Mrs. Baker, red-eyed from the night's miseries, groped for a chair, and sat heavily down.

"I *knew* I'd done it!" she wailed. "And now you're going to go and never come back! I'll never forgive myself as long as I live. The boarding house! My sakes alive, dearie! Baker and me haven't got money enough this morning to even borrow a stewed prune. If it wasn't for the post-office job, we'd be sleeping out in the brush. A new man went on the wheel down to the Green Front last night, and Baker's lost every good, iron dollar we ever had!" With which sorrowful confession, Mrs. Baker covered her head with her apron, and shook with sobs.

The Eastern woman's face lost its somber look, and grew softly radiant.

"But I'm not asking you to buy me out, Amelia," she said gently. "I'm only asking if you want it. I think it will earn you another home in Los Angeles if you're careful. I'm giving it to you, Amelia—free and clear."

An hour later Alva's things were packed and ready for the stage. She would leave as she had come—silently. And as to why she had come or gone,

no one in Magnet would ever be the wiser.

She stood in the doorway for a while, as she had been wont to do, looking for a last time at the curious place that had absorbed her life for six long months. But there was nothing of it that she wished to remember, nor was she conscious of any emotion except an overwhelming desire to get away as soon as possible. Presently she put on her hat and set out through the sagebrush behind the tents toward the cemetery on the hill. To-day she could stand beside her grave without reproach.

But because she began to feel enormously tired, she did not raise her eyes till she was nearly there. When she did so, she saw the red-haired woman, in a spangled dress and with nothing on her head, sitting on the ground in the blazing sunlight beside the headboard. Looking a little closer, she saw that the woman was drunk.

"Oh, it's *you*, is it?" the woman said contemptuously. "Go away and let me alone. I'm all right—and no bother."

"I haven't come to interrupt you," Alva answered.

"Then why are you here?" was the instant query. "But I don't care," she went on, taking a drink from a bottle beside her. "I've beaten *you*, Miss Iceberg—and no mistake about *that*. Dick Randall's gone—and he won't ever come back!"

"I know," Alva answered, and began to move away. "He's gone down to the valley after a mine."

"Ha! Ha!" said the red-haired woman. "Ha-ha-ha! That's pretty good. Yes. That might even be called 'very fair.' Gone down to the valley after a mine, eh? Yes, he's gone to the valley, all right—the Valley of the Shadow of Death! How's that, Miss Don't-touch-me? How's that for Bible learning? *And he won't ever come back!*"

Alva stopped and looked back, more

with curiosity than fear. Could it be that the other knew what had been done to the canteens?

The look, however, was too searching to suit the other, and she promptly took offense. And as she glared back at the Eastern woman, something seemed to pierce a hidden sac and let the gall-like bitterness of life for such as she flow out and poison eyes and face. Yet convulsed and hideous with anger though her face was, there was a curious glitter of triumph in her eyes.

"I've been watching you for some time," she said venomously. "You thought you were going to get Dick Randall for a husband—but you won't. I saw him kissing you yesterday. Well, you'll never kiss him again. Dick Randall wouldn't as much as look at the likes of me, and I've been a fool to think he would, but I've come up even with the game at last, 'cause I'm even with *you!*"

Alva wondered. So Randall had never associated with the woman, after all! However, it did not matter.

"How are you 'even' with me?" she asked, for the significance of the woman's tones still rang in her ears.

As the woman began to answer, the consciousness of what she was confessing seemed to sober her.

"Dick Randall was the finest man I ever knew, but he's dead now, and there's an end to him. If it hadn't been for you, he might have been mine. I knew the kind of man he was. He wanted a woman with a heart and a body—and he would have given her all of his in return.

"There was no one here before you came, and I was straightening up. I'd have been a good woman again—the best kind of a woman for a man like him—if you hadn't come along. For—what kind of a woman does a man like him want? He wants a woman that will stick by him day in, day out, forever. He wants a woman that will sleep

anywhere, eat anywhere, live anywhere—one that will go along with him in this rough country and help him with her common sense and her bravery—one that will see how he's building himself up every day, and who wants to be part of everything he does. He doesn't want a wife—he wants a *mate*! He wants some one he can turn to—some one that will take the trouble to look down into his mind and see what he's trying to do for them both. He wants some one who can look ahead and see the big future that's coming, and be satisfied in the meantime with one good, decent man. If a woman's going to stay out her life in this mining country, that's what she's got to do to be worthy of a man like him. If she don't like the life and can't see what's coming up, then let her get out!

"If you'd have been a regular Easterner, I wouldn't have been afraid of you. But he thought you were the kind of a woman I've been talking about, and so when he knew you were a good woman, too, it was all over for me. I guess he knew that I'd fight for him twenty times where you'd only turn and run, but probably the other side of it was too much against me. Since then I've tried to show him what I'd do for him, but it wasn't any use.

"Life's been hard for me. I guess God didn't figure on my amounting to much all along from the beginning. But if I can't ever get into *your* class, along of no fault of my own, why, then you can be mighty sure that you'll never get the man *I* wanted. You've said your last love words to Dick Randall, Miss All Right—and you've kissed your last kiss. Before he went away, I slipped some cyanide into his canteens!"

"Some *what*?" asked Alva, only partly understanding.

"*Cyanide*, you fool," replied the other contemptuously. "If he drinks a drop, he's done. And I guess it's all over now. So *you* won't get him!"

Alva sank down to a sitting position on the other side of the grave.

"So you really tried to kill him!" she said, in an astonished whisper. "Why—why, what a curious thing to do!"

"Why curious?" the woman retorted angrily. "You were in love with him, and he with you. I couldn't figure out how to get rid of *you*, so I did *him*. And no one will ever know how it was done, until you tell. Then it'll be too late."

"That's true," Alva answered, misunderstanding the last remark. "Probably he won't be found for weeks. But why did you do it? I didn't love him."

The red-haired woman looked as if she had not heard clearly, then shook her head in refusal of the idea. Her face began to show surprise over Alva's lack of interest.

"Don't talk like that," she said, with a weary gesture. "No *woman* can fool me. I can see through you like a pane of glass."

"But I say you are *wrong*!" Alva insisted. "I *couldn't* love him. I hated him. He was my worst enemy!"

"Go along, child!" was the tired rejoinder, and the woman took a drink from her bottle. "I don't know why you're saying it, but if it pleases you, why, go right ahead. You can't bother me. Nothing can."

Alva reached across the grave, and held the bottle down on the ground with her hand on the other's.

"Lillian," she said, with white anger, "if I asked you to believe every word I utter just as if your own mother told you, would you believe me *then*?"

"Sakes alive! Ain't she growing wild?" ejaculated the other. "Well, what *is* it, dearie? Tell mamma all *about* it. Do you think he shot young Jaffray?"

"I *know* it," Alva answered, and wondered how the other had guessed it.

"And what did you do to him for that?" jeered the woman. "Something devilish, I suppose—like me."

"Yes," said Alva quietly, and looked her square in the eyes. "Just—like—you!"

The woman frowned a little and blinked her bloodshot eyes. She took a long breath, and straightened up as if to collect her faculties.

"It's all right to fool a *little*," she said, "but don't let it go too far. You were in love with that man ever since the day you met, whether you know it or not. He knew it, too, and that's why I stood no show. But you couldn't do him any harm. You haven't had the right bringing up for it."

"He killed Donald Jaffray," Alva answered stonily. "There was no one to punish him for it, and no way to do it. So I did it myself—like you. Does that look as if I loved him?"

The woman's eyes grew stronger and clearer. They began to glitter with a strange light in which approaching horror was mixed with a near understanding. Her dry, colorless lips moved soundlessly. Her gaze became riveted on Alva's somber face.

"Why, *woman!*" she whispered, and grew pallid. "You're telling the truth!"

"I am," Alva answered, and it was impossible not to read the honesty in her tones. "Now will you believe me?"

The other woman seemed to turn to stone.

"You, too!" she whispered, while her hand clawed at her cheek. "My God! You, too!"

Then something inside her seemed to die. There had never been overmuch of either hope or happiness in her face at any time, and now even those faint lights flickered and went out forever. Her face went from white to the dead gray of ashes. Her eyes were as blank as a wall.

"And *that's* the biggest joke of all!" she said. "The game was against me from the start, but now the last card is out of the box."

She stared unseeingly before her for

a moment, then broke into an awful, jeering laugh.

"That's certainly a screamer on us two," she said. "You tried to kill him because you thought he'd done up Jaffray, and I tried to do it because I thought you were in love with him—and we were both wrong. Two *fool* women!" she ground out, between her teeth. "May God in His mercy have pity on our souls!"

Alva didn't understand.

"He shot him," she repeated somberly, and pointed at the grave between. "There he lies."

The red-haired woman gave her a startled look that seemed to question her sanity.

"Yes. There he *lies*," she answered, with fathomless contempt. "*And he's still lying to you*—just like he lied when he was alive!"

Seeing that she was not understood, she suddenly grew furiously angry. Putting out her hand, she struck Alva a stinging blow on the cheek.

"*Wake up, woman!*" she cried, with white-hot wrath. "Wake up and let me tell you something about this man—this wonderful man of yours that you tried to kill Dick Randall for—though you don't say how you did it." Springing up like an aroused tigress, she jerked Alva to her feet with a powerful clutch of her hand.

"Look down there at that grave!" she screamed. "Look down in there, and see if you see the fine, Christian gentleman that you thought you had. O-h-h-h! I know all about you, and why you came to Magnet, and if you hadn't fooled me and fooled Dick Randall, I'd have put you right long ago."

"Look down!" she cried, and pointed a quivering finger at the grave. "There lies a man who was *no good!* Don Jaffray was his name. And when I tell you that he was no good, remember that it's *me* that's telling you—*me*, who knows more about men in ten seconds

than you'd know in ten years—*me*, who's been with 'em from Alaska—drank with 'em, ate with 'em, lived with 'em, wasted my life for 'em. And I tell you that this fellow was the poorest, weakest, lowest specimen of a man that ever walked this desert. He never amounted to anything—he never *could*. All he had was a smile and a way with women. Do anything for *him*? Try to get justice for *him*? Commit murder for *him*? Why—he was worse than Danny the Bum ever thought of being, for while he was writing his precious love letters to *you*, he was spending all his money on *me*!”

“Lies! Lies!” came the frantic cry, as, with her face convulsed, Alva made to strike the other down. “You don’t know what you’re saying. You have no proof!”

“Is it proof you want?” the woman cried, springing back out of reach. “Then here it is. There’s part of a letter down in my tent that he wrote you last winter while he was in my own room. Now will *you* believe *me*?”

“Oh, I guess you will,” she went on, with a contemptuous glance at the blanched cheeks. “That’s always the way with you soft women. You haven’t got sense enough to pick out a good man to kill for. I suppose, like as not, he told you that he’d got done out of his claim. He used to tell me that, too—until I shut him up. Don Jaffray lost his claim because he was too drunk to get out and do his holding work. When time was up, it was Randall who did the work, and then went and gave him some money, which he didn’t have to do. Oh, yes, he was a fine one! If I’d ever been in love with Donald Jaffray, I’d want to go away and hide my head. Why, I even got him to sell his watch so as to give me money. Perhaps Randall bought that, too.”

Alva stood amid the ruins of her world, and saw the earth opening beneath her feet. The red-haired woman

might have picked a hundred different sins and called them Donald’s, and had only scorn for her pains, but the fact remained that she had made the one statement that Alva knew was unquestionably true. She had proved the one unforgivable thing that made all the others possible.

“He shot him!” Alva whispered, not because that was what she thought, but because her mind had stopped working and her lips were merely repeating what they had been long formed to say. “He shot him,” she said again, and then was done.

“He *never* shot him!” the red-haired woman screamed like a fury in her ear. “*He shot himself!* Danny the Bum saw him do it!”

She thrust her hand into her waist, and pulled out a battered notebook. “See that, you fool! That’s Danny’s precious book that I found on his body yesterday. He was the only man in Magnet who knew how Jaffray died.” Fumbling it frantically, she spread out a torn page under Alva’s staring eyes. “Look at it and read it yourself.”

And Alva read:

Last nite I see a yung feller shoot himself out in the brush back of the Red Onion abt $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. He done it with an old stile Frontier Colt 44 with 2 nics in the but. I could only get \$1 for it

After a long pause Alva lifted her eyes slowly from the page.

“Then—he—didn’t—kill—him—after all!” she said, with a frightful effort. “I—have—been—wrong—from—the—start!”

The red-haired woman laughed and tossed the book away.

“That’s what,” she said. “That goes for both of us. We were wrong from the start.” Her vitality seemed to wane, and she sank down, dull-eyed, on the ground. “How could I ever have figured to get right?”

Still on her feet, though her sense reeled, the woman from the East

clutched at her throat in a strangled effort to speak. "We've *killed* him!" she shrieked, as the truth came home. "We've killed that good man—and there was no reason!"

"There *was*, but there *ain't*," the other answered, in a dead voice. "And the difference between seeing things as they *are* and as they *ain't* is what makes lives right or wrong. I didn't know that *anybody* could be as crazy as I am, but I guess you're it. Now, go along and leave me. Because I'm *done*!" And she turned her back and began to fumble with a knot in her handkerchief where she had kept something concealed. But before she uncovered it, she raised the bottle once more.

"Here's to Dick Randall," she said. "A last drink to the whitest man in heaven. If he isn't there yet, he mighty soon will be."

And then the light that had been withheld from Alva Leigh for so many months came back into her mind. All in a flash she realized that her morbid brooding had dulled her perceptions long before she ever came to Magnet. If such a thing were possible, it would seem that not once since she left the East had she been truly normal. Half crazed by her loss, she had thrust aside every womanly instinct and let her obsession for vengeance have full rein, misreading every good motive, interpreting every honest action with suspicious, jaundiced eyes.

Although she would never have believed it if she had not lived among identically the same surroundings, the reasons for Donald's failure and all the progressions of his dreadful fall now lay plain before her. The evidence had been given, and no futile wish of hers could alter it. It lay in every self-excusing line he had written to her for four years—in what he had not written—and, above all, in what he had written, but had never sent. Lack of

will power, loneliness, bad companions, drink, and misfortune had changed the man little by little from a rather irresponsible rover into a broken, moralless wreck, and remorse had done the rest. The desert had beaten him.

And so the treasured image of Donald Jaffray passed out of mind forever. Another surged up instantly to take its place—one that was finer, nobler, infinitely more manlike in its indomitable strength. She saw the face of the Western desert man, he of the undaunted boyhood and the masterful years, as he had come through the darkness to her rescue on that first night. And again she saw him—as he had spoken his saddened good-by outside her door. Between these two visions lay the growth of her first true conception of life—the gift of a friendship that she now knew had been her only salvation in this dreadful place—and the offer of another thing that was more wonderful than friendship. As she saw her new image transfigured by these thoughts, the light of faith and love in his eyes was more than she could bear.

To add to her agony, the reasons for everything he had done were now so crystal clear. She saw that he had done her a friendly act, even before she had set out for Magnet, for it had been he who had sent her the marked newspaper months ago. It was plain that he had known who she was and why she had come to Magnet from the very first, and a great wave of shame beat her down when she thought of the insults whose prompting suspicion he must have understood so well.

And yet the short moment in which all these things were made clear did not admit of reviewing each scene and action by itself. Instead, she seemed to see all of them simultaneously, like a great composite picture in which she was constantly recognizing new proofs of that blessed gift which she had so

blindly refused—a picture so true that it finally led her on to her own actions and the inexorable end.

For a little while she tried to reject the idea that she had deliberately planned to kill another human being. Now that everything was so plain and clear, it seemed unbelievable that crime and the Alva Leigh whose purposes she knew so well could ever have joined hands. She thought of her family traditions, her religious beliefs, her carefully guarded girlhood, every protecting, sane-minded influence that had surrounded her life since the day of her birth, and criminality, for Alva Leigh, became an impossible thing. She thought of Natalie—of Sally—of Nannie Ferguson waiting faithfully at home—of all her old girl friends—of all the beautiful things that memory's world held—of the far more beautiful world to which some one had lately given her the key—and she was ready to cast the idea out of mind like the recollection of some hideous nightmare. And then she remembered Mrs. Baker's astonishment at the change that the desert had wrought, and was filled with awful fright. Could it possibly be that she, Alva Leigh, had actually become wicked?

A veil seemed to lift from her eyes. She saw her family, her friends, herself in the person of her earlier life, on the other side of a great gap whose abyss was infinite in depth. Upon the nearer brink stood the Alva Leigh of to-day, blackened forever with the same pitch that defiled the lost soul beside her.

She stood still, while yellow hills and sky and blazing sun rocked up and down. Everything grew black, and she could hear no sounds. Sanity trembled in the balance. Then her body revolted under the strain, and her heart began to beat once more. The blood flowed through her veins with an agonizing tingling. Sight and hearing returned

apace. She came into touch with life again.

And with her returning sense, the words that the other woman had last spoken came back to her, fresh and vivid. Her eyes opened wildly—she gasped from a dry throat—then flung up her hands to heaven with a cry.

"Not dead," she shrieked. "Not dead yet! God help me to reach him!" And with never a backward glance she whirled away and went running down the hill.

It was only a little after ten o'clock. Even if he had traveled fast, he would now be only halfway to Furnace Creek. Could she hope to overtake him? It did not occur to her that a drink from his canteen would be governed more by thirst than by the time of day—all she could think of was a great gray basin between ragged mountains and the figure of a man plodding along behind two burros through a sea of sage. Then she realized with awful dismay that she could never hope to reach him if she went on foot. She must go in a wagon or she must find a horse. And so she did not stop at her tent longer than to snatch the dripping canvas water bag from its nail outside her door. Then she rushed on behind the tent toward the lumber yard below the town, for it often happened at this time of day that the horse on which Andy made his excursions to the outlying shafts stood, saddled and bridled, in a corral in one corner of the yard.

As she hurried through the brush, the sight of the idlers in the streets filled her with agony. She wanted to cry out to them—to stop their foolish joking and shock them into action. The thought that there was no time to speak the word that would change that lazy scene into an uproar—that she alone must carry the terrible knowledge in her mind until the end—set her in a frenzy. Then she turned the last tent and gasped with relief, for the horse

was standing in the corral, ready saddled and bridled, and nosing over the fence to see who was coming.

A few steps more and she had pulled the gate bars out and was untying the halter. Throwing the loop of the water bag over the pommel, she tried to lead the animal close to the fence so that she could mount. When he failed to understand her excited tugging, she struck him frantically with her clenched fist, and sobbed aloud over her impotence. But he soon threw up his head with a jerk and sidled nearer the fence, and, without stopping to try the cinch, she stepped up on the boards, and got into the saddle.

All told, it was a bare three minutes after the red-haired woman's last words had been spoken before Alva was galloping furiously down the long slope of the basin toward Death Valley.

And as she rode she was unmindful either of the loose girth beneath her or of the hell of heat overhead, for a new anguish had been added to her burden.

She loved him.

Up on the hot hillside the red-haired woman in her spangled dress sat picking laboriously at the knot in her handkerchief. She succeeded in opening it after a time, and took out a lump of something that stuck to her fingers as she handled it. Breathing heavily, she raised it to her tongue for a tentative taste. Then she sighed once or twice, and swallowed it. The lump had seemed small and white, like a cube of sugar. But it was not sugar, and after a moment the woman shuddered and lay down beside the grave.

"The difference between seeing things as they are and as they ain't."

For the hundredth time Alva's straining eyes picked out a distant figure in the sage only to drop it again in despair, and think of the red-haired wom-

an's bitter sally. The faint black shape had been only the trunk of a Joshua palm, lurching from side to side in the heat waves that eddied liquidly in the air, grotesque and hideous with its out-flung arms, and yet not a whit more grotesque than the images that she had thought so real for all those months.

Her face had grown haggard. Miles back she had lost her hat, and her head was frightfully hot. She had never before ridden a horse for a tenth of the distance she had already covered in the hour past, and the stirrups were too long and the leathers too short. She could only grip as best she might with her sore, weakened knees, and hold to the pommel with both hands.

A half hour later she felt herself swaying in the saddle, and, taking up the water bag, she poured a little of its contents on the crown of her head. Then, instead of drinking, she hung the bag where it had been before, and fixed her hands in a deathlike clutch on the pommel, resolved to ride that way until she fainted dead away. As to how far she had come, she could not even guess, but she felt that her furious riding must be bringing her very near, and every moment she searched the view ahead more closely than before. Up and down over the swales she rode, pausing occasionally on a crest to peer ahead, then plunging down the other side, urging her tired animal on with voice and heel. Once, as she trotted down a slope, she found the saddle sliding down on the horse's neck, but as she knew only vaguely what the trouble was, she did not think of dismounting and tightening the cinch. She had begun to repeat some words to herself.

"You must not drink!" Over and over again she said it—monotonously, untiringly—singing it and shouting it—striving to throw it out ahead of her, so that if there were such a thing as telepathy, the thought wave might reach his mind. "You must not drink!" she

cried frantically. "You must live! Live! Do you hear me?"

Her horse stumbled, with one foot in a gopher hole, and she caught him up savagely. He broke into a run, and suddenly she felt the saddle turning under her. Too startled to know what to do, she saw herself falling off to one side, and in another moment was lying unconscious on the stone-crusted ground while the horse dashed on. When she finally came to her sense, and realized what had happened, the animal was nowhere to be seen.

The woman gazed around her at the panorama of bone-dry desert and flaming hills, and threw up her hands to heaven with an inarticulate cry for help. Her head was muddled and her face was covered with dirt where she had rolled in the dust. Her dress was torn, and a bright rivulet of blood flowed down her cheek from a deep cut on her forehead. But none of these things mattered now, and, with her eyes wild with anguish over her terrible predicament, she strove to collect her scattered senses so that she could decide which way to go. Finally, she put the sun behind her where it had been before, and stumbled away through the brush. She would go north, as she had been going before she fell—and he must not drink—he must not drink!

Her foot tripped on something, and she looked and saw the water bag where it had fallen when the saddle turned. The stopper was still in its neck, and she stooped with an effort and picked it up.

"Richard!" she called. "Here is water for you! Water—water, Richard! But you must not drink!"

A mile farther and now the sun was like a furnace mouth! Around her the Joshuas lurched and stuck out their gnarled arms at her. She found herself lost in a great clump of them. One caught her dress and seemed to try to draw her nearer. She struck out at it, terrified, and reeled away.

"Richard! Richard!" she cried. "They're trying to take the water away from me! But you must not drink it, even if I bring it to you. I'm a murderess, Richard, and I'm bringing you poisoned water. Wait—oh-h-h, wait!"

At the foot of a high swale she found she could go no farther, and sank down on her side in the hard yellow sand of the wash. She could not see very well now, and the clamor in her ears was that of a thousand boilers being riveted all at once.

"I wanted you to wait," she sobbed. "You said I'd help you find me some day. I laughed at you then—and I tried to kill you, too—but it's all happening just as you said. I said I didn't love you—and I lied. Richard—Richard!" she whispered humbly. "Will you ask me again?"

The clangor was abating in her ears now, but it was not because there were no more boilers to rivet, but because the engine that furnished the power was running down. A few more revolutions and the noise would cease. Alva thought it would be a great relief.

And so the first time she heard the new sound she did not recognize it. It was a thin and rather faint sound, and seemed to come from a long distance away—something like the clink of a coffeepot and a pan against the top of a burlap-wound canteen. But when it came a second time, she struggled to her knees and put her hand to her ear. Another clink and the sound seemed closer. She staggered to her feet—her eyes opened wide with hope—she stumbled down the arroyo with arms outstretched.

A mouse-colored burro came into view around the end of the swale, stopped, sidled off to one side, and looked around. A few feet behind it stood another burro, and a man was unfastening a canteen from its pack.

She ran forward with her last remaining strength—tried to repeat her

warning cry—and fell prone in his arms. The empty canteen dropped on the ground and rolled away.

Her eyes opened slowly.

At first she could not see well, for everything was blurred, but she knew she was lying in the cool shade of a ledge with part of his pack for a pillow. Something cold was on her forehead, and, as her vision cleared, she saw him wetting a second handkerchief with water from the canvas bag. Her heart leaped and the warning cry rose to her lips. Then, almost as quickly, she began to relax. Little by little the frightful tension eased and she dropped back on the rough bed with every anguish dissolved forever in a flood of heavenly peace. The thing she had done to harm him had proved the cause of his salvation. The poisoned water had leaked away.

When she looked up again, he was bending over her, his face worried and strained.

For a long time she was silent, looking up into his face with eyes that were only deep pools of tears. She did not know either what he knew or what he suspected. Perhaps the good-by that she had never said might as well be spoken now, but she could not tell. She only knew that if there were to be any happiness for her on this earth now, it must come from him whom she had tried to injure. Yet her eyes were not without bravery, for behind them lay the strength of will to atone, if need were, with life itself. And so her look came straight and pure from her pure soul—asked bravely for all she had thrown away—and won it.

She put up her hand and drew his face slowly down to her own.

"You said I'd help you find me, Richard," she whispered, "and here I am. I've been wrong from the start, but, please God, I'm right now! Will you forgive me—and kiss me, Richard?"

Some hours later the burros were headed home. He walked beside her as she rode, and now the long miles of the daytime were all too short.

"You'll lose the Gun Sight, Richard," she said remorsefully. "You forgave me too soon."

"I've won more than any mine," he answered soberly. "But we'll not lose it. The claims have been recorded. We'll be there—both of us—in the fall."

Her hand sought his and rested in it. Her lips tried to form the old, old vow:

"Whither thou goest, I will go. Thy people shall be my people——"

Her voice broke over the solemn words. She was only a girl, after all—and she had suddenly begun to feel terribly alone. It was a strange life on which she was entering—a strange ending to all her plans.

Then his arm went around her, and all her troubles passed away. Wherever they might go and whatever might happen, she knew that she would never be alone again, nor would the new life with him seem strange. She was coming to woman's full estate; already its boundless reaches were in sight, and their glory dimmed the dreadful valley that she, as well as he, had barely escaped.

And so, in the circle of his arm, she rode up the last swale and saw Magnet. The lights were out and the moon was shining. The tents were as beautiful as driven snow. It was Magnet, and yet it was not the madhouse of wickedness and distorted images that she had left that day, for she was seeing it now with the clear eyes of the man beside her, and in the light of an abiding peace. It was where love had found her, in spite of herself, and where love would cleanse all.

She drew him closer and knew that he understood her thought.

"I've been a sick woman, Richard."

"The desert has cured you, then,"

he answered. "For us two, it has been a friend."

He pondered for a moment, then felt in his pocket for his watch. He opened it and held it out in the moonlight so that she might see the inside of the case.

She saw her own face.

"I've waited a long time for you, Alva," he said simply. "I knew you from the very first. But even before that, I knew that you would be the woman I would want."

She could not trust herself to speak. Her eyes could only envelop him with their soft love light. She slipped the picture from its hiding place, and dropped the watch underfoot.

He nodded understandingly, and smiled, then put the tiny photograph away in his coat.

"You knew me? Then you've known what I've thought—and done?" she asked directly, for less than the whole truth would not suffice.

For answer, he gathered her close in his arms, the light of a great wonder in his face.

"I know—and have forgotten," he said. "You're *too* brave! If I asked you to tell me, you'd do it if it killed you—and that would kill me, too. We've not come up out of our valley to look back!"

And with those words, the door to the past closed forever.



A CERTAIN JOY

A CERTAIN joy unto my window sill
Came singing through the morning yesterday.
I scarce dared smile, so still I sat, so still—
Yet did it fly away.

There, when my red-cheeked neighbor opposite
Had spread—ah, craftily!—her rose-hid snare,
So still I sat, I heard her loud delight,
What time she trapped it there.

The night comes on—I ponder many things—
Ah, better far that joy should fly away
Than hold it thus with bruised and broken wings
And, crippled, bid it stay.

THEODOSIA GARRISON.



IRAN across him, in my travels, half a dozen times during two years. It was an almost exact similarity in our names that gave rise to the incidents that brought about our acquaintance. The first time was at Bonn. Hardly had the hotel clerk handed me my mail, when a tall, spare, round-shouldered man of middle age entered, walked up to the desk, and inquired, with an air of bright expectation:

"Are there any letters for me?"

At the clerk's negative reply, the other turned away, his face falling dolefully. So complete, so naive was his chagrin that, had he been twenty years younger, I would have suspected that it sprang from first love brooding over unrequited epistles. It was a fine face, whose monastic simplicity just missed being austere by reason of the mild, patient, blue eyes. His clothes were rather shapeless, and shone at the elbows and between the bowed shoulders, upon which he seemed to bear—such was my immediate impression—an invisible burden. A gentle unworldliness clung about him; his distinction sprang from a queer aloofness of manner, half shy, half musing.

Glancing through my mail, I found, to my surprise, that each of the three envelopes bore the firm name of an in-

ternational press-clipping agency; while a second glance showed me a slight deviation from the correct spelling of my name. In doubt, I consulted the desk clerk. The stranger was recalled to receive what proved to be his mail. We exchanged remarks as to the striking similarity of our names. He smiled—a small, shy twinge of a smile, that somehow resembled a half-betrayed throb of pain—then raised his hat and retired. I still recall the boyish relief in his face as he stole off, like an unobtrusive ghost, to digest the contents of those precious envelopes.

"An author," was my thought.

Perversely enough, people with names sufficiently alike to cause mutual confusion seem unable to keep out of one another's way. I and my acquaintance of the press clippings continued to run across each other, or each other's mail, at Algeceiras, Mentone, Chamounix, and Castellamare. Sometimes it was at a hotel, sometimes at the letter-forwarding department of our common bankers. Sometimes our united mail was delivered to me, sometimes to him; sometimes he merely got my letters and I his; and sometimes we inadvertently opened them, whereby I learned that he still received press clippings, while he gathered such initial scraps of information as my Aunt Mary's death and

my sisters' children's diseases. Under these circumstances, two strangers can hardly fail to entertain a kind of informally intimate feeling toward each other.

My feeling was one of gradually whetted curiosity. The man's correspondence—and I had handled much of it—seemed to consist wholly of press clippings. Whenever I saw him, he always appeared at the mail desk with a bright air of anticipation, and always stole off into a corner to pore exhaustively over those mysterious slips of newspaper matter. Thus meeting, we sometimes jested about the stupidity of mail sorters, and formed a tenuous acquaintanceship. I took him to be an American long exiled in Europe. His gentle, apostolic face, half-shabby attire, and middle-aged solitariness, his tiny, twingelike smile, and his broad shoulders, patiently bowed under that invisible burden which he seemed to carry about the world—all this made rather a pathetic picture. I was puzzled by that stoop, that eternally shouldered burden; it stirred in me dim associations of I knew not what. Finally I labeled him with a sobriquet that, since it will bring him to your vision far more clearly than would his own name, I will here set down: "Sir Galahad Gone-to-seed."

But what was he? And why was he wandering about the earth, followed from point to point by the output of a press-clipping bureau? Nothing that his shy, tentative remarks ever contained gave me the clew. I set him down, I think, as a composite of author, secret-service agent, defaulter, remittance man, and harmless crank; then returned to America and forgot him.

Two years later I was in New York, stopping at the Holland House. Hastily opening my mail one afternoon, I found myself perusing a bill for I know not how many hundreds of press clippings, inclosed wherewith was one of those

neatly mounted slips of newspaper matter, so irritatingly familiar to me. The private yacht of a certain distinguished European family had been spoken at Suez, on her way eastward—such was its substance. Half desperate, half amused, I ascertained that my double in name was in the house, then sent up my card and was admitted to his room.

I found him—a trifle grayer, a trifle more stoop-shouldered—gazing disconsolately out of his windows. In his mild, patient way, he seemed glad enough to see me, but his face did not brighten conspicuously until I brought forth his letters. He explained that he was in New York for the first time in ten years.

"And," said he, with light relief, "I was just reflecting that there was nobody left to break my sense of strangeness to it all."

But I knew that it wasn't I, but those precious envelopes of clippings, that had suddenly made him feel more at home.

We decided to dine together, and determined upon a certain riverside inn, up Fort George way. He excused himself for a few moments, on some pretext or other—in reality, I am persuaded, to absorb the contents of those envelopes. Meanwhile, I noticed, piled on a table, half a dozen bulky scrapbooks. They were crammed with clippings, every one of which, to my cursory glance, bore—now with photograph, now with text—upon the whereabouts and doings of that same distinguished family. These clippings were in many different languages, having been gathered in every part of the world where newspapers are published, and some of them must have been ten or fifteen years old. A theory of the "American claimant" nature crossed my mind; I was convinced that, in some way, my mild, gone-to-seed clipping collector had long been kept out of his rights. Nor, in a sense, was I far wrong.

The revelation came after dinner, as we sat on the terrace, at our backs the brilliantly lit, music-resounding inn, with its stream of chug-chugging motor cars and its veranda full of gyrating dancers; before us the great, silent Hudson, backed by the Palisades' ramparts, which stretched northward, headland upon headland, like ghostly Titans sentinelizing the silence. Intimacies wake strangely. I had mentioned the sharp contrast between the overcivilization of the gay scene behind us, and the primitive nature, lying so near us, in the opposite cliffs.

"Yes," he answered, instantly en rapport, "I've had that thought all evening. And there are people, too, who have tried to reconcile those elements—the overcivilized and the primitive—in a single life. But it's hopeless. Just as you see them here, there's always a great gulf between the two."

Whatever my reply was, he mistook it as applying his dictum to his own case.

"My life?" he disclaimed. "Oh, no! That's been a thing of no importance." Then that queer, trepidantly shy twinge of a smile, so close to pain, flickered across his thin lips, as he added quietly: "You see, I—I lived all my life in three days."

He fell to reminiscing of his removal, as a youth, from his native mountain town in the South to New York, where he arrived, penniless and friendless, unused to city ways, a stranger among strangers; of his long siege of loneliness, and of the woman who ended it. As he spoke her name, he nodded over his shoulder at the scene of lights, music, luxury, alive with its fitful flitting of human moths.

"There," he said, "you have one-half of her." Then he turned toward the night-bosomed river, the wooded cliffs, primitive and fecund; and his voice rang as with an old, forgotten pride as

he exclaimed: "And there—there you have the other half!"

Toward the northernmost forelands he set his face. As if addressing himself to them, and not to me, he spoke on.

II.

"I had just one friend, a woman of position and means—the widow of a former partner in the law firm in which I was employed—who owned an estate on Long Island, where she invited me to her house parties. There, over a week-end, the thing happened. It was that unearthly adventure which is called love at first sight. On the afternoon of my arrival, I strolled off alone and ran across Claire in the depths of the moss-hung woods.

"She was perched in a tree fork, throwing crumbs to squirrels and birds. Wood creatures always made friends with her. I've never been able to describe Claire, even to myself, except to say that she had the queer, wild look of one of Böcklin's dryads, and that at times her eyes were green. She seemed somehow to be absolutely a part of the place, as if she had been sitting in that tree fork ever since the beginning of the world. I had hardly thought this, as I lifted my hat in passing, when she exclaimed in mock fright:

"'Oh! Did you just come out of an oak tree? And am I trespassing in your woods?'"

"She meant, as she afterward put it, that I seemed always to have been associated, in her mind, with that spot. Considering that neither of us had ever seen the place before, this instantaneous impression of ours, felt in common, was rather strange. Now, except to say that from the first moment there seemed to be a miraculous absence of all barriers between us two innocents—for we were but twenty-two and twenty-three, respectively—I can give you no idea as to how it came about that,

when we returned to the house a few hours later, we were mutually acknowledged lovers. As we parted at the wood's edge, she laughed.

"Don't you dare go back to live in your oak, my Silvius—whatever your stupid real name may be. I've a feeling that, once I turn my back, you'll vanish into the forest glades forever, and that I'll knock on your tree trunk in vain."

"And that," I said, "is just what I was thinking about you, my—"

"Your Sylvia, of course!" she prompted, then kissed me, and fled away into the dusk.

"Half an hour later, I was presented to her across the dinner table. Beautifully gowned, dignified, almost coldly conventional, it staggered my imagination to identify her with my wild sprite of the woods. Later, there was dancing. Her face and eyes glowed as with fever; I could see that she craved admiration, and that she was flirting abominably with her crowds of partners.

"Oh," she laughed mischievously, in answer to my aggrieved looks, "you mustn't mind it. I've two selves, and this one is always uppermost at dances."

"On Monday morning a motor car whirled her off for a visit elsewhere, while I took the train back to town, suddenly realizing en route the extraordinary fact that, with the exception of two slips of paper containing our names and addresses, we knew absolutely nothing of each other. As for me, I was living the hall-room life on twenty dollars a week; yet, gloriously deep in first love as I was, I could conceive of no impediments. Till knowing Claire, I had never so much as taken a woman's hand in mine; and, for that matter, I never have since.

"The next night, in my dingy little room, I received a note which proved that my adventure was not—as I was half ready to believe—part of a dream.

I still remember the words of that first note. It ran:

"Did you ever get a letter written at sunrise? This is one—and it's all your fault. Don't think that I'm only a dream. I'd have you know, sir, that I'm an extremely solid reality, and very fond of having my own way, which just now is a desire to disprove my uncanny misgiving that *you're* only a dream. Sylvia gives her Silvius twelve hours to come here and prove that she's really awake.

"New as I was to city life, the name and address of the friends with whom she was staying in town meant nothing to me; and it was not until I found myself entering a handsome residence on middle Fifth Avenue that I realized that they must be people of some importance. Of course, I was horribly discomforted by the liveried flunky and the magnificent reception room into which he showed me. Then Claire appeared—still so strange to my eyes that it was almost like dreaming the same dream twice—and I quite forgot our surroundings, so paltry in comparison to our two selves.

"I did say, however, just before leaving: 'Your friends are wealthy, aren't they?'

"To which she replied, with that almost flippant inconsequence with which she, who was so completely dependent upon luxury, always took her advantages for granted: 'Oh, yes, I suppose so.' And then: 'Why, I forgot you didn't know. They're my uncle and aunt.'

"On the way home to my tiny room, in one of the shabby-genteel downtown streets, I began to foresee complications; and next day, by that queer freak of chance according to which a name, newly learned, is thereafter almost immediately reencountered, they were thrust upon me with a shock. Opening my newspaper at the society page, I found Claire's photograph staring me in the face. There followed a paragraph containing her name, as well as that of

her uncle and aunt. It ran—— But I'll use other names. Mr. and Mrs. David van Alstyn were to entertain Miss Claire Craven, and others of her set, at their place on Ochre Point, during the tennis week at Newport.

"I knew little of society life. It was a man in our law office, a New Yorker born and bred, who enlightened my ignorance concerning the family into which I had blundered. With an indulgent smile, he informed me that the Van Alstyns, many times millionaires, were known the world over.

"And this Miss Craven?" I asked, exhibiting the photograph.

"Oh, every one knows about *her*!" he told me. "She's what the 'yellows' love to call 'the beautiful Miss Craven,' 'the season's furor,' and so on. Yes, she's been flying about and leading things ever since she made her *début*, a few years ago. Mrs. van Alstyn is half sister to Mrs. Craven. The Cravens never had a cent, you know, and Mrs. C. has scraped and pinched, all her life long, to give Claire the proper advantages for her beauty. From childhood, the girl's been brought up with just one idea—that of making a brilliant match. Her aunt gives her the *entrée*, and everybody succumbs to her looks. She's been reported engaged once or twice, but the affairs must have been promptly nipped. Mrs. Craven's out for big game, you know."

"Big game! And here was I, with my miserable thousand-a-year clerkship! Well, I have rather an old-fashioned sense of honor, and I felt like an interloper, a masquerader. I immediately addressed letters to Claire and to her mother, giving them a full account of myself. I wrote that if Claire cared to wait, I would work like a slave for our future; but that, inasmuch as we, who moved in two entirely different worlds, had taken our step in the dark, she need not, upon cooler judgment, consider herself bound.

"Claire's reply merely invited me to dine. At my first glance at her simple home, at her mother and sister, their severely plain attire, their almost nun-like submission toward Claire—a silently adoring attitude that rendered them a drab background for her brilliancy—I felt somewhat of the long, silent sacrifice that had gone to make that glorious, beautifully gowned creature who filled whatever room she entered like morning sunlight. It was like seeing a single rich rose in full bloom on a withered stem.

"Once we were alone, I turned to Claire with my heart in my throat.

"Your mother?" I asked. "What did she say to my letter?"

"To my surprise, Claire laughed lightly, then explained that she had intercepted my letter and destroyed it. I suppose I looked shocked. She added:

"Why should I worry her? The mere notion of a suitor with less than a million would keep her awake for nights. Don't let's spoil things."

"Her quaint, flippant way of disposing of the problem over which I had been fairly anguishing for three days staggered me.

"But surely that's not right," I answered. "She must be told exactly what I am and why I'm here. Otherwise I'd feel underhanded, I'd have scruples——" But she covered my mouth.

"You serious, old-fashioned thing!" she laughed. "What have scruples to do with loving me?"

"Then you mean," I said tremulously, "that you'll wait? That my poverty makes no difference?"

"Why talk of that?" she pouted, lifting her chin in the willful way with which she disposed of unpleasant topics. "Isn't it enough for the present that we love each other? Can you help being poor? Can I help having been brought up to marry a fortune? Can we help

caring for each other? No! Then don't try to help it—just love me!

"And so we kept our affair secret. This was quite opposed to my views, yet her regal, high-handed way always won me over. Hers was a rich, abounding nature that had never been cramped or thwarted. Scorning relinquishment as a weak thing, she had all the pagan virtues and beauties, and would have circumvented God to gain her ends. We just drifted. She cared for me, I know, with all the very best of her nature. The cleavage between us lay in her dependence on luxury; it was the breath of her being.

"She was rarely at home, except for a few days at a time. Her year was one running series of visits in Newport, Palm Beach, Tuxedo, Lakewood, Bar Harbor—wherever her set went. To the nearer by of these places I followed, on her hostesses' invitations, over week-ends—for me, proud, but not too happy occasions—when I would see her, beautiful, yet unaffected, flattered, yet unspoiled, surrounded by her host of admirers, men whose most serious business consisted of motoring, polo, yachting, court tennis, directors' meetings; who at Claire's nod would gladly have bought up a regiment of poor devils like me and handed us over to her as a bodyguard. Among these surroundings we would meet as mere friends, she and I; and whenever I saw her thus, her artificial, luxury-loving self dominant, it was with despair that I tried to recognize in this semistranger the wild, glowing, conventionless forest spirit who roamed hand in hand with me through the woodlands.

"Yes," she would say, "I've always known this idle-rich life, as you call it, and without it a part of me would be utterly miserable. You see, I've two halves that are always fighting, never reconciled. There's the real half and the dream half. The real half belongs to the world, the dream half to you.

The real half revels in lights, excitement, admiration; the dream half longs for you and the silence of the woods. Yes, I suppose my real half *could* marry some kind, good, poky person for whom I would pur like a cream-fed fireside cat; but my dream half will never be any one's else than yours."

"Many women, I dare say, have been plagued by some such two diversely demanding sides to their natures. Few, I suppose, have had sufficient self-conviction to solve the problem in the strange way in which Claire ultimately solved it. Don't think of her as being unwomanly or glacial. The very essence of our relationship lay so much in the fantastic, make-believe spirit of two runaway children that I doubt if she ever dreamed how great, as time went on, was my need of her in every sense. And I don't complain. I was happy, would always have been happy to love her, if only in our secret, romantic, boy-and-girl fashion.

"For there were those other times, the few days in each month when, according to our compact, she slipped back to New York, apparently to be with her family, in reality to spend most of the time with me. No one ever suspected the reason of those absences. Early in the morning I would call for her at the house of her bosom friend, Erla, who alone guessed something of our secret.

"Now carry me off," Claire would laugh, as my arms went around her, "for I'm sick of flirting, flattery, and shams; sick of the men who'd buy me up and put me in their homes like just one more costly painting or statue. Carry me off with you. Steal me away from everybody. Make me forget everything but you and me and World's End."

"That was her name for a spot that we had discovered in our rambles. It lies some miles up the west bank of the river, at the base of the Palisades.

Sitting here, I can almost see the very headland. Once atop of the cliffs, we could wander the woods all day long without sight of a human face. Descending through a craggy ravine, we found ourselves in a tree-embowered cove that gave on a tiny crescent of beach, while one small, white cabin—known by us as World's End House—nestled near by among the pines. Here, isolated by the great cliffs behind us and the broad river at our feet, with no sound but the murmuring of pines and the lapping of waters, it seemed as if we had reached the remote verge of things, and that this was indeed world's end. By the name, she also meant, in her fantastic way, that when the last day dawned and the tinsel shows of things, which withheld the other half of her from me, were destroyed by fire, each of us would somehow return to this farthest-out spot, to meet under the Rock-a-bye Pine.

"They have a foolish sound, these names and fancies, yet without mentioning them I could give you no idea of her strange, half-elfish nature, never quite in tune with any object until she had clothed it with some unreal will-o'-the-wisp significance. This tree, the tallest of a grove, stood overlooking the white cabin, whose one inmate, an old woman, soon became friendly with us. We would drink from her well, admire her old-fashioned garden, listen to her proud, rambling talk about her seafaring son, and persuade her to share our luncheon, which we might safely have eaten from any of the immaculate floors of her tiny, shipshape house. I am positive that the good woman never wondered whether we two represented a marriage, an engagement, or a courtship; to her we were just lovers, and, therefore, to be befriended, and you could have read as much in her simple, kindly old face as she waved us farewell from her doorstep, with a 'Come again soon, my dearies!' Then we

would climb to the pine grove and lie in its fragrant, shadowy depths till late afternoon.

"Once, lying thus, Claire caught my hand and whispered:

"'Sh-h! Speak low! I've discovered something.' She pointed upward to the grove's tallest pine, whose top was swaying to and fro in the light breeze. 'It's haunted,' she said.

"I answered that it was haunted by the wind. She called me stupid, and made me go over the nursery rhymes, mocking at my failure to guess which one she was thinking of.

"'Shut your eyes!' she commanded. 'There! Don't you hear *that*?'

"I replied that I heard the wind in the treetop.

"'Not wind!' she said mysteriously. 'That's a voice, a little voice crying. No, keep your eyes shut; you mustn't look at me while I tell you.' She pressed my eyelids down, then continued: 'You know, I've always felt that trees are haunted. They are haunted by the little unborn souls who are waiting to be called to earth. Each treetop is a cradle, and in every one of them a little soul lies, rocking in the wind, asleep. And when two lovers meet under a tree, the lonely little soul in that tree cries in his sleep, because he wants to be awakened and brought to earth.'

"It was all a part, I knew, of the game under whose rules alone she would accept me—that of a boy-and-girl love, romantically innocent, and not to be permitted to grow up, and I treated her fancy as such. Often thereafter we used to speak of the Rock-a-bye Pine—she so lightly that I, who knew the mere mask she showed the world, sometimes thought that even her tenderness toward me was but one more layer of subtle artifice. But once, as we sat under the pine, she suddenly turned away and broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

"'I only play at life,' she sobbed.

'I'm too selfish, too cowardly ever to call that little treetop soul to me. He will never wake—never! Oh, you should despise me!'

"But, you see, I was a mere boy when I first met her; I knew only our innocent way of love, and patience had grown to be second nature with me. Then, too, I was always hoping that she would tire of the world of shows, and accept me with what little I could give her. I lived on that hope for six years. Then something happened. An Englishman came over with one of the cup-challenge crowds and met Claire at the races. He was a man of fifty, a widower, and he had great wealth, fine estates, and an old title. I'll call him the Duke of Marbury. He was fêted and dined, the newspapers were full of him, and everywhere his name was coupled with Miss Craven's. He stayed only a month or so, then returned; but with the following spring came an invitation from him, asking Claire and her mother to visit his household.

"Claire was now twenty-eight; her first success in society had waned, and her mother was continually urging her to marry. Heretofore, nothing had ever threatened our friendship, but now I felt certain that, if she made the visit, she would end by accepting Marbury, and I told her so. She protested that Marbury could never be anything to her, that no one should ever come between us. In fact, she had refused so many offers in the past, rather than break with me, that these words gave me fresh hope. I let her go.

"Of course, she made a great success on the other side, and the English illustrated papers were full of her photographs at the time. Well, one day I read in the cable dispatches of her engagement to Marbury. I understood. The sight of so much wealth and social power had dazzled her; she had responded to the instincts implanted in her by the training of a lifetime; she

had fulfilled her destiny. Like a man who makes his will, signing away all he owns, I wrote her the necessary formalities of congratulation. Instead of confirming the news, she continued to write in the old, gay, tender strain, hardly naming Lord Marbury except as a charming host. Then suddenly came the cablegram: 'Sailing *Campania*, twentieth. Have written.' Her letter, which arrived a few days in advance of her, merely set the date of our meeting. As to the place, she wrote:

"'Let it be at World's End. I couldn't bear meeting you with other people about. Be waiting for me under the Rock-a-bye Pine.'

"I was there in the afternoon hours of a glorious October day. Presently, along the woodland path, there came the lithe, swinging figure I so well knew. She wore a black walking skirt and a white sweater; her head was bare. In fact, she was dressed exactly as she had been dressed on the occasion of our first meeting, six years before. When she saw me, she dropped her hat and held out both arms.

"'Oh, my 'Silvius!' she laughed gayly as we neared; then she sank her forehead on my shoulder and lay dumb. There was just the woodland silence and her long, shuddering sobs. When at last she could speak, she said, as if in explanation:

"'Home! Home—and you!'

"'Amazed, I asked: 'Do you mean really that?'

"She nodded. All the old, playful evasion in her eyes had vanished. Instead, they glowed with a submissive sweetness that was strange to me.

"'More—oh, so much more than you think!'

"'But Lord Marbury?' I asked.

"'Her eyes checked me.

"'I am yours!' she answered impetuously.

"'But the newspaper dispatch?' I persisted. 'You know it said——'

"'Yours, all yours!' she cried. 'That is why I am here. Can't you see that I am yours?'

"'Then,' I said, 'it was my right to meet you at the pier, to let it be known in the eyes of the world——'

"She dropped me a mock curtsy.

"'How masterful we've become, sir!' She clung to me with swift tenderness. 'What do we care for the eyes of the world? Aren't my eyes enough for you?' And as she fixed them upon me, again I saw the slow, upwelling tears. But she dashed them lightly away, crying: 'Oh, make me forget—forget everything but you, and this day of days, and World's End!'

"All that afternoon she was the wild, woodland thing incarnate, a creature newly uncaged, with ever a sly, tender laughter and sidelong eyes that dared me to guess their hidden meaning. At sunset we stood below cliffs in front of World's End House, and the little old woman hobbled forth, and smiled on us, and told Claire that dinner was almost ready. When she had vanished, Claire answered my surprised glance.

"'Yes, I stopped to see her, before meeting you. Mother doesn't expect me for dinner. She's visiting friends, and I—she smiled—'I'm with Erla, as usual.'

"We dined under the grape arbor, while the sun, setting far behind the cliffs at our back, fired the eastern cloud bank with a glow that clothed everything in a rosy mist. Dusk fell, and the stars' pale points crept forth. The old woman had cleared the table and gone in. Claire shivered, saying that she was cold. The windows of World's End House showed leaping flames. We went inside, stooping to the low lintel, and sat before the log fire in that tiny, quaint room. On its walls hung rusty flintlocks, faded samplers, old skeins of fish net, and through the open door of the room adjoining I saw snowy bed linen, against which

background stood a great jar filled with the flaming maple leaves of autumn. Save for the footsteps of the old woman moving overhead there was absolute stillness. Civilization seemed a million miles away. Claire started up from her reverie.

"'Do you know what I was thinking?' she asked, with her strange, elfish eyes on mine: 'That this is World's End, and—and—— Oh, how I wish that the world *might* end to-night!'

"She walked to the door and threw it wide. A gust caught the candles, and they went out, leaving the room in fire-light. When I found my way to her side, she was standing in the doorway, gazing far down the river at a murky glow that smoldered overhead—that aurora borealis of great cities, which always hangs over the night sky of New York.

"'No!' she exclaimed, waving a hand at what she read, I suppose, as a symbol of the feverish glamour amid which so much of her life had been passed. 'No, not to-night! You've had me, and you'll have me again, until I've burned my poor, silly moth wings at your flame.' The sad self-contempt died out of her voice, and she cried triumphantly: 'But not to-night! I'm my own mistress to-night, whatever may happen to-morrow.'

"The passionate abandonment of her voice, near to tears, startled me. 'Claire——' I began, but she turned impulsively and lay in my arms.

"'Not Claire,' she whispered, with strange earnestness, 'but Sylvia, your own Sylvia, who will never belong to any one else in the world. Yes, call me by that name again and again and again. Make Sylvia live for you. Don't let her die. Oh, don't let Sylvia die!'

"Uncomprehending, I soothed her as one would soothe an overwrought child. I said something about going home. At that, she raised her head, and, with her

eyes smiling full on mine, stretched forth a hand and pushed the door shut, leaving us behind it in the firelit room.

"We are at home!" she breathed.

"Between us there stretched a moment of invisible struggle. For that space of time my every instinct rose up between me and the woman for whom I had waited so long; who, though I knew her free to be mine, should have been given me, my pride of possession insisted, under the eyes of all the world. But it was upon her, her high, queenly mood that always seemed to say: 'Royalty's gifts cannot be refused'; and as ever it prevailed.

"Listen!" she whispered. "You hear?"

"And through the stillness there wafted to our ears the low, wailing murmur of the wind in the Rock-a-bye Pine. She took my hand and led it to the door lock, then closed her own upon mine, about the key, and turned it."

III.

Across his forehead Sir Galahad Gone-to-seed passed a handkerchief, then folded it tight and pressed it between both palms. Even as one reads the silent distress of an athlete by the rigid clutch of his fingers on the running corks, as the goal draws near, so this man's mute anguish was revealed through the medium of that ruthlessly wrung bit of linen. You might have said that he held his heart between his palms, and was squeezing out its life-blood. His face worked powerfully for a while. When he had regained self-control, he continued:

"As I told you, I am a man whose whole life was lived in three days. I suppose I achieved that rare revelation, 'infinity in the palm of your hand, and eternity in an hour.' Well, the tiny oasis is surrounded by a thousand leagues of desert, and yet I'd traverse

my desert all over again for those same three days at World's End.

"I brought her flowers every morning, and once when she expressed a wish for fringed gentian, I climbed the cliffs to find them. As I turned to go, she suddenly put her arms about me and kissed me.

"Tell me you don't despise me for this," she urged; "that you'll never hate me." And to my foolish love words she kept repeating: "Yes! Believe that of me, think that of me always."

"And even when I had reached the cliffs' summit, I still saw her slender figure far below, as she stood watching me to the last.

"An hour later I returned, to find only the old woman, who eyed me with a puzzled, pitying smile, then pointed toward the Rock-a-bye Pine, where, she said, something had been left for me. And there I found it, a letter, three sheets of penciled paper, pinned together with pine needles—the last earthly token of Sylvia. I have it still. In part it reads:

"Yes, I lied to you; otherwise you would never have stooped to take me, your Sylvia, who was born with our first kiss, and who dies with our last. For Sylvia is dead; it is Claire who is to marry Lord Marbury. I told him frankly that affection and respect were all I could bring; and only on condition that I was first to return home, did I agree to his wish that we should be married within the month. What has passed between us here has to do with that side of my nature which he could never have waked, never have owned.

"For once, when he spoke to me of his wish for children, all the way across the ocean from far World's End, there came to my ears the cry of that little, lonely trgetop soul, high up in the Rock-a-bye Pine, whom only you and I could call to earth; and all at once I shuddered at the thought of that other child which would be demanded of me. I knew that I could give Marbury my wifehood, but I knew that I could give only you and yours my motherhood.

"Marry soon; that will make it easier for both of us. My two selves have warred so long, I am very tired, and this is my way of

reconciling them. And yet have I? For the little face that is to come will waken a throb and an ache in me always."

"And—and——" I hesitated.

Sir Galahad divined my question:

"To-day the boy that Marbury and she both worship is fourteen. Claire is forty-three; Marbury is sixty-five. On account of his health, they travel continually. I, too, travel. I've dropped entirely out of touch with business affairs, friends, correspondents; my one remaining interest is in—in press clippings. Wherever I am, wherever Claire and her boy may be, I still learn of them thus. I've quite come to depend on it, as one depends on an absent friend's letters."

"And when Marbury dies?" I asked. "Will she send for you?"

Sir Galahad Gone-to-seed, the time tyrannized, the toy of hopes deferred, glanced shyly over his shoulder, as if about to make shamefaced confession. Then, in the hushed voice of one who speaks of life after death, he said:

"I hope. I—I almost believe."

He leaned riverward, as if straining for a glimpse of the distant headland that hid World's End. His face took on the old, patiently musing gaze, his lips their tiny, twingelike smile; his shoulders resumed their old, invisible burden. And suddenly I recognized that burden, all but beheld it palpably defined—a cross.

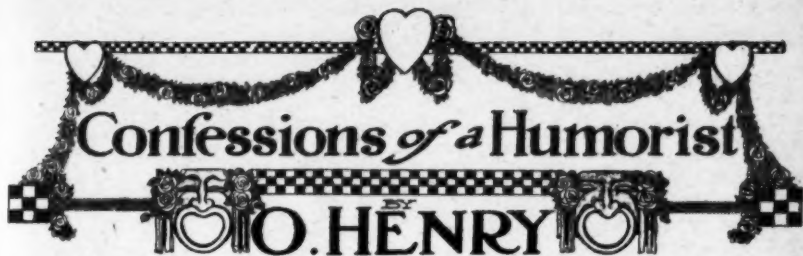


DEATH IN LIFE

YOUTH winds of benison and balm
 Filched from the rose, the sand, the sea,
 The joy of leaves, the murmured charm
 Wrought happily by bird and bee,
 And down the wind, far wefts of mist
 That dipped to meet a racing tide—
 All these it had—the day we kissed—
 The day I died.

All that I owned—the rose's blush,
 The vital pulsing of the sea,
 The sand's glad yield, the south wind's rush,
 A heart outsing bird and bee—
 I laid upon the altar drear,
 Whose bitter priests were Fate and Pride,
 And left you, all unknowing fear,
 The day I died.

MARTHA McCULLOCH-WILLIAMS.



Confessions of a Humorist

O. HENRY

THERE was a painless stage of incubation that lasted twenty-five years, and then it broke out on me, and people said I was It.

But they called it humor instead of measles.

The employees in the store bought a silver inkstand for the senior partner on his fiftieth birthday. We crowded into his private office to present it.

I had been selected for spokesman, and I made a little speech that I had been preparing for a week.

It made a hit. It was full of puns and epigrams and funny twists that brought down the house—which was a very solid one in the wholesale hardware line. Old Marlowe himself actually grinned, and the employees took their cue and roared.

My reputation as a humorist dates from half past nine o'clock on that morning.

For weeks afterward my fellow clerks fanned the flame of my self-esteem. One by one they came to me, saying what an awfully clever speech that was, old man, and carefully explained to me the point of each one of my jokes.

Gradually I found that I was expected to keep it up. Others might speak sanely on business matters and the day's topics, but from me something gamesome and airy was required.

I was expected to crack jokes about

the crockery and lighten up the granite ware with persiflage. I was second bookkeeper, and if I failed to show up a balance sheet without something comic about the footings or could find no cause for laughter in an invoice of plows, the other clerks were disappointed.

By degrees my fame spread, and I became a local "character." Our town was small enough to make this possible. The daily newspaper quoted me. At social gatherings I was indispensable.

I believe I did possess considerable wit and a facility for quick and spontaneous repartee. This gift I cultivated and improved by practice. And the nature of it was kindly and genial, not running to sarcasm or offending others. People began to smile when they saw me coming, and by the time we had met I generally had the word ready to broaden the smile into a laugh.

I had married early. We had a charming boy of three and a girl of five. Naturally, we lived in a vine-covered cottage, and were happy. My salary as bookkeeper in the hardware concern kept at a distance those ills attendant upon superfluous wealth.

At sundry times I had written out a few jokes and conceits that I considered peculiarly happy, and had sent them to certain periodicals that print such things. All of them had been instantly accepted. Several of the editors had written to request further contributions.

One day I received a letter from the editor of a famous weekly publication. He suggested that I submit to him a humorous composition to fill a column of space; hinting that he would make it a regular feature of each issue if the work proved satisfactory. I did so, and at the end of two weeks he offered to make a contract with me for a year at a figure that was considerably higher than the amount paid me by the hardware firm.

I was filled with delight. My wife already crowned me in her mind with the imperishable evergreens of literary success. We had lobsters croquettes and a bottle of blackberry wine for supper that night. Here was the chance to liberate myself from drudgery. I talked over the matter very seriously with Louisa. We agreed that I must resign my place at the store and devote myself to humor.

I resigned. My fellow clerks gave me a farewell banquet. The speech I made there coruscated. It was printed in full by the *Gazette*. The next morning I awoke and looked at the clock.

"Late, by George!" I exclaimed, and grabbed for my clothes. Louisa reminded me that I was no longer a slave to hardware and contractors' supplies. I was now a professional humorist.

After breakfast she proudly led me to the little room off the kitchen. Dear girl! There was my table and chair, writing pad, ink, and pipe tray. And all the author's trappings—the celery stand full of fresh roses and honeysuckle, last year's calendar on the wall, the dictionary, and a little bag of chocolates to nibble between inspirations. Dear girl!

I sat me to work. The wall paper is patterned with arabesques or odalisks or—perhaps—it is trapezoids. Upon one of the figures I fixed my eyes. I bethought me of humor.

A voice startled me—Louisa's voice.

"If you aren't too busy, dear," it said, "come to dinner."

I looked at my watch. Yes, five hours had been gathered in by the grim scytheman. I went to dinner.

"You mustn't work too hard at first," said Louisa. "Goethe—or was it Napoleon?—said five hours a day is enough for mental labor. Couldn't you take me and the children to the woods this afternoon?"

"I *am* a little tired," I admitted. So we went to the woods.

But I soon got the swing of it. Within a month I was turning out copy as regular as shipments of hardware.

And I had success. My column in the weekly made some stir, and I was referred to in a gossipy way by the critics as something fresh in the line of humorists. I augmented my income considerably by contributing to other publications.

I picked up the tricks of the trade. I could take a funny idea and make a two-line joke of it, earning a dollar. With false whiskers on, it would serve up cold as a quatrain, doubling its producing value. By turning the skirt and adding a ruffle of rhyme you would hardly recognize it as *vers de société* with neatly shod feet and a fashion-plate illustration.

I began to save up money, and we had new carpets and a parlor organ. My townspeople began to look upon me as a citizen of some consequence instead of the merry trifler I had been when I clerked in the hardware store.

After five or six months the spontaneity seemed to depart from my humor. Quips and droll sayings no longer fell carelessly from my lips. I was sometimes hard run for material. I found myself listening to catch available ideas from the conversation of my friends. Sometimes I chewed my pencil and gazed at the wall paper for hours trying to build up some gay little bubble of unstudied fun.

And then I became a harpy, a Moloch, a Jonah, a vampire to my acquaintances. Anxious, haggard, greedy, I stood among them like a veritable killjoy. Let a bright saying, a witty comparison, a piquant phrase fall from their lips and I was after it like a hound springing upon a bone. I dared not trust my memory; but, turning aside guiltily and meanly, I would make a note of it in my ever-present memorandum book or upon my cuff for my own future use.

My friends regarded me in sorrow and wonder. I was not the same man. Where once I had furnished them entertainment and jollity, I now preyed upon them. No jests from me ever bid for their smiles now. They were too precious. I could not afford to dispense gratuitously the means of my livelihood.

I was a lugubrious fox praising the singing of my friends, the crows, that they might drop from their beaks the morsels of wit that I coveted.

Nearly every one began to avoid me. I even forgot how to smile, not even paying that much for the sayings I appropriated.

No persons, places, times, or subjects were exempt from my plundering in search of material. Even in church my demoralized fancy went hunting among the solemn aisles and pillars for spoil.

Did the minister give out the long-meter doxology, at once I began: "Doxology—sockdology—sockdolager—meter—meet her."

The sermon ran through my mental sieve, its precepts filtering unheeded, could I but glean a suggestion of a pun or a bon mot. The solemnest anthems of the choir were but an accompaniment to my thoughts as I conceived new changes to ring upon the ancient comicalities concerning the jealousies of soprano, tenor, and basso.

My own home became a hunting ground. My wife is a singularly fem-

inine creature, candid, sympathetic, and impulsive. Once her conversation was my delight, and her ideas a source of unending pleasure. Now I worked her. She was a gold mine of those amusing but lovable inconsistencies that distinguish the female mind.

I began to market those pearls of unwise wisdom and humor that should have enriched only the sacred precincts of home. With devilish cunning I encouraged her to talk. Unsuspecting, she laid her heart bare. Upon the cold, conspicuous, common, printed page I offered it to the public gaze.

A literary Judas, I kissed her and betrayed her. For pieces of silver I dressed her sweet confidences in the pantalettes and frills of folly and made them dance in the market place.

Dear Louisa! Of nights I have bent over her, cruel as a wolf above a tender lamb, hearkening even to her soft words murmured in sleep, hoping to catch an idea for my next day's grind. There is worse to come.

God help me! Next my fangs were buried deep in the neck of the fugitive sayings of my little children.

Guy and Viola were two bright fountains of childish, quaint thoughts and speeches. I found a ready sale for this kind of humor, and was furnishing a regular department in a magazine with "Funny Fancies of Childhood." I began to stalk them as an Indian stalks the antelope. I would hide behind sofas and doors, or crawl on my hands and knees among the bushes in the yard to eavesdrop while they were at play. I had all the qualities of a harpy except remorse.

Once, when I was barren of ideas, and my copy must leave in the next mail, I covered myself in a pile of autumn leaves in the yard, where I knew they intended to come to play. I cannot bring myself to believe that Guy was aware of my hiding place, but even if he was, I would be loath to blame

him for his setting fire to the leaves, causing the destruction of my new suit of clothes, and nearly cremating a parent.

Soon my own children began to shun me as a pest. Often, when I was creeping upon them like a melancholy ghoul, I would hear them say to each other: "Here comes papa," and they would gather their toys and scurry away to some safer hiding place. Miserable wretch that I was!

And yet I was doing well financially. Before the first year had passed I had saved a thousand dollars, and we had lived in comfort.

But at what a cost! I am not quite clear as to what a pariah is, but I was everything that it sounds like. I had no friends, no amusements, no enjoyment of life. The happiness of my family had been sacrificed. I was a bee, sucking sordid honey from life's fairest flowers, dreaded and shunned on account of my sting.

One day a man spoke to me, with a pleasant and friendly smile. Not in months had the thing happened. I was passing the undertaking establishment of Peter Heffebower. Peter stood in the door and saluted me. I stopped, strangely wrung in my heart by his greeting. He asked me inside.

The day was chill and rainy. We went into the back room, where a fire burned in a little stove. A customer came, and Peter left me alone for a while. Presently I felt a new feeling stealing over me—a sense of beautiful calm and content. I looked around the place. There were rows of shining rosewood caskets, black palls, trestles, hearse plumes, mourning streamers, and all the paraphernalia of the solemn trade. Here was peace, order, silence, the abode of grave and dignified reflections. Here, on the brink of life, was a little niche pervaded by the spirit of eternal rest.

When I entered it, the follies of the

world abandoned me at the door. I felt no inclination to wrest a humorous idea from those somber and stately trappings. My mind seemed to stretch itself to grateful repose upon a couch draped with gentle thoughts.

A quarter of an hour ago I was an abandoned humorist. Now I was a philosopher, full of serenity and ease. I had found 'a *refuge* from humor, from the hot chase of the shy quip, from the degrading pursuit of the panting joke, from the restless reach after the nimble repartee.

I had not known Heffebower well. When he came back, I let him talk, fearful that he might prove to be a jarring note in the sweet, dirgelike harmony of his establishment.

But, no. He chimed truly. I gave a long sigh of happiness. Never have I known a man's talk to be as magnificently dull as Peter's was. Compared with it the Dead Sea is a geyser. Never a sparkle or a glimmer of wit marred his words. Commonplaces as trite and as plentiful as blackberries flowed from his lips no more stirring in quality than a last week's tape running from a ticker. Quaking a little, I tried upon him one of my best pointed jokes. It fell back ineffectual, with the point broken. I loved that man from then on.

Two or three evenings each week I would steal down to Heffebower's and revel in his back room. That was my only joy. I began to rise early and hurry through my work, that I might spend more time in my haven. In no other place could I throw off my habit of extracting humorous ideas from my surroundings. Peter's talk left me no opening had I besieged it ever so hard.

Under this influence I began to improve in spirits. It was the recreation from one's labor which every man needs. I surprised one or two of my former friends by throwing them a smile and a cheery word as I passed

them on the streets. Several times I dumfounded my family by relaxing long enough to make a jocose remark in their presence.

I had so long been ridden by the incubus of humor that I seized my hours of holiday with a schoolboy's zest.

My work began to suffer. It was not the pain and burden to me that it had been. I often whistled at my desk, and wrote with far more fluency than before. I accomplished my tasks impatiently, as anxious to be off to my helpful retreat as a drunkard is to get to his tavern.

My wife had some anxious hours in conjecturing where I spent my afternoons. I thought it best not to tell her; women do not understand these things. Poor girl!—she had one shock out of it.

One day I brought home a silver coffin handle for a paper weight and a fine, fluffy hearse plume to dust my papers with.

I loved to see them on my desk, and think of the beloved back room down at Heffebower's. But Louisa found them, and she shrieked with horror. I had to console her with some lame excuse for having them, but I saw in her eyes that the prejudice was not removed. I had to remove the articles, though, at double-quick time.

One day Peter Heffebower laid before me a temptation that swept me off my feet. In his sensible, uninspired way he showed me his books, and explained that his profits and his business were increasing rapidly. He had thought of taking in a partner with some cash. He would rather have me than any one he knew. When I left his place that afternoon Peter had my check for the thousand dollars I had in the bank, and I was a partner in his undertaking business.

I went home with feelings of delirious joy, mingled with a certain amount of doubt. I was dreading to tell my

wife about it. But I walked on air. To give up the writing of humorous stuff, once more to enjoy the apples of life, instead of squeezing them to a pulp for a few drops of hard cider to make the public feel funny—what a boon that would be!

At the supper table Louisa handed me some letters that had come during my absence. Several of them contained rejected manuscript. Ever since I first began going to Heffebower's my stuff had been coming back with alarming frequency. Lately I had been dashing off my jokes and articles with the greatest fluency. Previously I had labored like a bricklayer, slowly and with agony.

Presently I opened a letter from the editor of the weekly with which I had a regular contract. The checks for that weekly article were still our main dependence. The letter ran thus:

DEAR SIR: As you are aware, our contract for the year expires with the present month. While regretting the necessity for so doing, we must say that we do not care to renew same for the coming year. We were quite pleased with your style of humor, which seems to have delighted quite a large proportion of our readers. But for the past two months we have noticed a decided falling off in its quality.

Your earlier work showed a spontaneous, easy, natural flow of fun and wit. Of late it is labored, studied, and unconvincing, giving painful evidence of hard toil and drudging mechanism.

Again regretting that we do not consider your contributions available any longer, we are, yours sincerely,
THE EDITOR.

I handed this letter to my wife. After she had read it her face grew extremely long, and there were tears in her eyes.

"The mean old thing!" she exclaimed indignantly. "I'm sure your pieces are just as good as they ever were. And it doesn't take you half as long to write them as it did." And then, I suppose, Louisa thought of the checks that would cease coming. "Oh, John," she wailed, "what will you do now?"

For an answer I got up and began to do a polka step around the supper table. I am sure Louisa thought the trouble had driven me mad; and I think the children hoped it had, for they tore after me, yelling with glee and emulating my steps. I was now something like their old playmate as of yore.

"The theater for us to-night!" I shouted; "nothing less. And a late, wild, disreputable supper for all of us at the Palace Restaurant. Lumty-diddle-de-dee-de-dum!"

And then I explained my glee by declaring that I was now a partner in a prosperous undertaking establishment, and that written jokes might go hide their heads in sackcloth and ashes for all me.

With the editor's letter in her hand to justify the deed I had done, my wife could advance no objections save a few

mild ones based on the feminine inability to appreciate a good thing such as the little back room of Peter Hef—no, of Heffelbower & Co.'s undertaking establishment.

In conclusion, I will say that to-day you will find no man in our town as well liked, as jovial and full of merry sayings as I. My jokes are again noised about and quoted; once more I take pleasure in my wife's confidential chatter without a mercenary thought, while Guy and Viola play at my feet distributing gems of childish humor without fear of the ghastly tormentor who used to dog their steps, notebook in hand.

Our business has prospered finely. I keep the books and look after the shop, while Peter attends to outside matters. He says that my levity and high spirits would simply turn any funeral into a regular Irish wake.



EN PASSANT

WITH pallid glow athwart a velvet hill,
 I felt the cool of sapphire cañons deep
 That numbed my heart; the while, as in its sleep,
 Some lone bird called in errant minor trill.
 A gray moth's clinging set my hand a-thrill;
 And widening winds that round gray spaces sweep
 Had bowed the trees in seeming shame, to keep
 Half hidden their bare limbs 'neath grasses still.

From out the lacing of a branch, the sun,
 So frail and wan, had sent with listless mien
 A butterfly on petaled wings, astray.
 Hope sprang anew, for lo! above the dun
 Of withered boughs, my eyes beheld the sheen
 Of new-born leaves! Singing, I went my way.

ALYSE HUNT WHITAKER.



ELIZABETH watched the great white car swing through the gates and out toward the open desert. The African sun hung low in the brazen heavens, and the stretch of sand, bordered by majestic palms, seemed transmuted into a vast pool of molten gold that quivered in heat and light. The sirocco had blown a withering blast all day, and the leaves of the crimson buginvillea that flaunted its wanton arms about the low white house were powdered with glittering dust. Two mammoth flags, one French, the other American, flapped and fluttered boisterously over the gate of the garage, and the American eagle and the "*Coq Gaulois*" defied one another from a discreet distance.

Larbi, the great Sloughie desert dog, yapped and tugged fiercely at his leash as his mistress barred the gates and turned toward the house. His yellow eyes grew tender and kind as she laid a light hand on his rough head, and a mute adoration sprang into his faithful gaze, while ripples of delight shook his long, lean frame. Elizabeth snapped the leash from his collar, and with one clean leap his heavy paws were on her shoulders and his pink tongue seeking in vain to bestow a friendly caress on the laughing face of his captive.

"Down, Larbi! Down, my boy! Down, you splendid brute!" she commanded, and with drooping ears and tail he slid to the ground beside her, rubbing his sides against her knee.

Slipping one hand through his collar, she ran down the inner court toward the workshop. Hadje, the car washer, grinned a wide smile as he saw the pair approach, and suddenly a deafening noise of mingled barks and howls went up from behind the door of the tool room.

An enormous black griffon, who responded to the blighting name of "Lemon," was the first to escape through the barely opened door; and at his heels followed "Ginger," a creamy collie; "Poker," an impertinent fox; "Mike," a gentle Pomeranian; and last, and, incidentally, least, "Marquise," a tiny King Charles. At once war was declared, and Elizabeth, who had taken a sudden and unexpected seat on the bricks after an onslaught from Lemon and Ginger, rocked in shrieks of laughter among the jealous but happy family. Mike and Marquise wriggled treacherously into her lap. Larbi's cold nose sniffed at her bare neck, and the heterogeneous rest barked and rolled, capered and jumped, to the detriment of Elizabeth's person and apparel.

"Attention!" she commanded sternly,

and instantly all noise and movement ceased.

"Larbi, fetch the cows!" And the huge yellow hound turned and trotted toward the gate, where Hadje stood in waiting.

"Ginger, round up the chickens!" and in a flash the collie shot over the low fence that divided the courtyard from the sun-drenched pasture.

"Lemon! Ah, my poor Lemon! Come here to your mother and hark to the hard-boiled words she would fain murmur in your ear. Sit up and look her in the eye, and if you have tears, prepare to shed them. Son of a frivolous French mother and a dissolute, aristocratic Polish father, you are the result of an international and ill-assorted marriage. Thus your total depravity and complete lack of moral sense and propriety. You are a limb of Satan, a brand to be snatched from the burning, a loose liver, with an evil eye. You are wanton in your wickedness, low in your tastes, and the very leer of your orbs speaks of a reprehensible, degenerate soul. But, lawks, lawks, my boy, you are the most altogether loveliest and charmingest little old black pup that ever wagged a plume for a tail, and I just love you harder than rocks, for all your cussedness!"

Lemon writhed in an ecstasy of canine delight, alternately sitting on his haunches and walking on the bias. Two silky ears of ludicrous length hung over his great, liquid, and innocent eyes, and there was an eternal reproach in his expression, as if he were asking piteously: "Why, oh, why, 'Lemon'?"

Elizabeth raised herself from the ground, deftly disengaging herself from the canine obstacles; and lifting one finger in mock solemnity, she gave one parting admonition to the long-suffering Lemon:

"Go into the kitchen and say your prayers, that Fatmah may know it is time to eat and give us our supper.

And you three little spoiled darlings may come with me while I cut the nasturtiums and water the house plants."

The dejection in Lemon's attitude and the droop of his tail suggested that prayers in the kitchen held no charm for him while the obese Fatmah reigned supreme among pots and kettles. When there were fleshpots to be exploited or petty larcenies to be perpetrated, that was quite another affair; but Fatmah, for all her obesity, was remarkably agile when punishment was in question, and the broom handle maddeningly ubiquitous and unyielding. But being too well born to question the orders of a lady, he turned obediently and sidled kitchenward.

Elizabeth caught up a sprinkling can of water, and, followed by the three small dogs, disappeared around the angle of the tool house to give the thirsty plants a much-needed drink.

Presently, Fatmah came out from beneath the grape arbor that sheltered the kitchen from the blazing afternoon sun, and proceeded to lay the supper table under a magnificent cypress tree that thrust its mighty branches heavenward from the exact center of the court.

A platter of luscious purple figs and sun-kissed muscatel grapes came first; then a bowl of fragrant honey, a generous pat of unsalted butter, and a crusty loaf of snowy wheaten bread. Fatmah stood still, eying the arrangement, and a sluggish mental process seemed to be taking place beneath the purple silk *foutah* that held her henna-stained locks in place. A dawning gleam of intelligence lightened her stolid countenance for a fleeting second, and she turned and ambled toward the kitchen, her flowing yellow garments flapping about her bare ankles.

The deepening twilight cast purple shadows over earth and sky, and a bewildering perfume of honeysuckle,

rose, and mimosa drenched the evening air with a heady sweetness. Great, burning clouds, that changed from crimson to orange and then to mauve and gold, sank lower, and yet lower, on the misty horizon, and the shrill cries of the swallows and the thrilling notes of the nightingales mingled with the holocaust of the heavens.

Elizabeth rounded the house, her arms filled with vines and flowers, and stood a moment transfixed at the matchless beauty of the swiftly falling night. She stretched her strong young body in physical pleasure, and steeped her being in the glory of the night.

The minutes slipped by unnoticed, and then, the pangs of hunger assailing her, she clapped her hands authoritatively, and Fatmah lumbered into view.

"Come, come, my old one!" Elizabeth expostulated. "Thou wouldst not see me perish with hunger! Bestir thy fat self, or Mohammed, thy master, shall know of thy laziness, and with his heavy *trique* play a fantasia on thy brown body!"

Fatmah grinned a toothless grin, and, disappearing into the kitchen, reappeared a moment later with a platter in whose hollow lay a golden-brown omelet, flecked with tiny mushrooms and bathed in a rich brown sauce. Elizabeth served herself at once, and Fatmah busied herself with a brazier and coffee-making utensils, picking her way between the dogs, whose expectant eyes were alert for the necessary lunges after flying morsels of bread and omelet that sailed about inelegantly and were caught with unerring snaps.

The delicious fragrance of Fatmah's incomparable coffee drifted up from the adjacent brazier as Elizabeth attacked the platter of fruit, and she watched, in lazy anticipation, the creamy, brown liquid as it poured into the tiny white cup.

"Tell me again, Fatmah, what coffee must be, to be Arab coffee."

The woman raised her splendid black eyes and responded in broken French: "It must be hot with the heat of the great desert, sweet with the sweetness of love in the springtime, strong as the arm of Mohammed, who is the prophet of the only true God, and black as the soul of a Jew." At the word Jew, Fatmah turned to the left and spat upon the ground.

Suddenly the telephone from within the house rang sharply. Elizabeth ran swiftly toward the office and disappeared into the house. Fatmah cleared away the dishes and placed the coffee on the table.

Across the sandy stretch that divided the crenelated city of Oudjda from the Franco-American garage came the muffled throb of tomtoms and the subdued scream of Arab flutes. It was the marriage season—for the Arabs marry and give in marriage only when the egg-plant is ripe—and each evening the streets were filled with weird music—which Elizabeth denominated as "epileptic"—and the smoke of flaring torches from the processions filing through the streets.

The office door burst open with a bang, and Elizabeth darted out into the court. Her face was white except for two scarlet patches that excitement had burned in her cheeks, and her eyes blazed blue fire.

"Hadje, be quick!" she called sharply. "There is no time to lose!"

The slim brown boy came quickly forward.

"Now listen carefully, and try to understand at once without my having to repeat. The General Girardeau has just telephoned from Marnia that he must have a car in half an hour to take him and two of his staff officers to Naima to-night. The Sultan Moulay Hafid has abdicated, and there is to be an attack on the French soldiers between El Aioun and Naima. The camp of the *Deuxième Chasseurs* is situated at

about six kilometers from Naima, and the general offers a thousand francs to the chauffeur who will take him to the camp by eleven to-night. I am going to be that chauffeur!"

Hadje's mouth opened for a remark, but was restrained by an imperative gesture.

"Hurry, now, and we will verify the car together. There's no road after El Aioun, and it will be *'à la grâce de Dieu.'* Oh, yes—another thing! The general must not know that it is a woman at the wheel, so send Mohammed to fetch one of the patron's dust coats, a pair of goggles, and a cap with dust flaps, such as monsieur wears when going toward the desert."

Pushing the stunned boy ahead of her, she ran into the garage. Hadje spoke in guttural Arabic to the dozing Mohammed, who roused himself and went in quest of the desired apparel.

"Lower the top, and strap the Stepmey wheel with two extra tires, firmly. Put four extra air tubes in the box under the seat, and fill the gasoline, oil, and water tanks. I'll see to the headlights and lanterns myself."

Tying an enormous apron over her dress, she unscrewed the two headlights, emptied the burned-out carbure, changed the burners, and refilled the cylinders with freshly broken carbure.

"Test the tires, Hadje, for with the heat we have had for the past two days the sand will be burning hot, and I can't risk bursting tires to-night. When all is ready, drive the car to the gate, and in the meantime I will prepare myself for the drive. Every minute now means lives saved, so waste not an instant. Fatmah!" she called. "Come and help me, and for Heaven's sake stop your sniveling! The *'Marocains'* are not going to kill me, and if they catch me, I may be queen of the harem to some mighty caïd."

She laughed nervously as she braided her heavy hair in two long plaits and

pinned them firmly around her small head.

"Quick! A khaki shirt waist and skirt, and now the patron's dust coat and a pair of goggles, and then I can defy the Shah of Persia to recognize a woman in this get-up."

The cap was adjusted snugly over head and ears and the fasteners snapped protectingly under her chin. Next the disfiguring goggles were donned, and, armed with a heavy pair of gauntlets, she dashed into the office. From a table drawer she snatched a revolver, and, with a whimsical smile, she thrust Jacques' cigarette case and a box of matches into the capacious pocket of her dust coat.

The throbbing of the big six-cylinder motor made her catch her breath sharply, and with a tightening of the lips and a glitter of determination in her eyes she walked out to the waiting car and climbed into the wheel seat.

"Untie the Sloughie, Mohammed!" she called, and when the hound was free, she whistled gently, and he bounded forward into the car beside her.

"Now open the gates, and when once I'm out, fasten doors and windows, and don't worry about me. I'll be all right, and may perhaps meet the patron at Sidi Yaya."

The Arabs stood in awed silence as the powerful car slid through the open gates and disappeared down the road toward the tiny station of Oudjda.

Darkness had fallen, and the station clock showed half past eight as the car swept a semicircle and drew up in front of the exit gate. Five minutes later a small, panting engine, dragging a special car, lumbered into the train yards and came to a standstill. A tall, lean man, in the uniform of a French general, followed by two less important officers, jumped from the platform and walked quickly toward the waiting car.

General Girardeau glanced at the slender figure sitting at the wheel and acknowledged the military salute of the chauffeur. A half-burned-out cigarette glowed between the fingers of the latter, but was flicked to the ground as the officers approached.

"Do you know the road to El Aioun, *mon petit*?" the general asked.

"*Parfaitement, mon général*," came the muffled response.

"Then drive like the devil, for there is fighting to be done for Marianne*, and these *Marocains* are such savage beasts that not one of our boys must fall into their hands. What have you there beside you? Ah, it's a dog, and a Sloughie at that! A good idea to have him along; he may be of use. And now, *en route*!"

Elizabeth opened the throttle and pushed the accelerator with firm but gentle pressure. The car picked up speed steadily, and climbed the hill that led toward the mountains surrounding El Aioun. A broad, white ribbon of light lay ahead on the dusty sand, and tiny splinters of silex and gravel whirled up from under the car, making a cloud of impenetrable misery for any who might follow in its wake. The speed increased steadily until the powerful machine was licking up the kilometers at a vertiginous rate. Two small hands lay lightly on the wheel, and two steady blue eyes gazed unblinkingly into the white radiance ahead.

Larbi had been rocking from side to side with the swaying of the car, but suddenly he leaped into the seat beside his mistress and gave a low growl.

"Attention!" the chauffeur murmured. "When Larbi growls like that, it is sure to mean something, for he is a trained desert dog."

Another growl, fiercer than before, and then a horrid, snarling noise just

ahead in the oleander thicket. Elizabeth breathed a sigh of relief.

"It's camels," she said over her shoulder. "I'm going to slow down and let Larbi drive them off the road until we have passed."

At a word from his mistress, the great hound lunged from the car and shot down the road ahead. The air was filled with the ugly, raucous sounds from the drove of camels, surprised and frightened at their grazing. Four or five of the ungainly beasts galloped across the road in a frenzy of fear at the chuffing of the motor and the blinding white light of the two great reflectors. For five hundred yards the panic continued, and then Larbi came bounding down the road, and, with a mighty leap, cleared the door of the car and landed on the seat at Elizabeth's side. She patted his shaggy head with one hand while she threw in the clutch for top speed, and pressed the accelerator with determination to make up for the few minutes lost.

Again the car flew forward, swerving to avoid the holes and rocks that began to abound in the unfrequented road, and pounding its great, honest heart out for the safety of many lives. The way continued through flat, though uneven country, for fifteen kilometers, and then began to mount steadily toward the narrow pass that leads to El Aioun.

The sky was an inky mass of clouds, racing ahead of the impelling sirocco. No star lighted the impenetrable blackness of the heavens, and the tiny crescent moon appeared but semioccasionally between heaped-up banks of murky blackness, only to be swallowed anew in oppressive darkness. The wind grew hotter and hotter, and the sand swirled in blistering clouds across the plains. Suffocated with heat and the blinding gusts of sand, the officers wrapped their faces and heads in their scarfs and left the responsibilities of

*The French counterpart of "Uncle Sam."

the road to the tense eyes and strained wrists of the chauffeur.

Out of the blackness of the night, far to the right and high above, a thin tongue of flame shot up, fanned by the howling sirocco. An instant later another fire showed bright in the darkness, and another, and another, until eight flaring blazes formed a broken circle from the mountaintops.

The car slowed down and stopped, and, turning in her seat, Elizabeth said crisply:

"We are signaled, and that means that the pass through the mountains will be guarded. But I think we can fool these dull savages if one of you will help me for a moment."

The officers unwound themselves from the protection of their scarfs, and the general was beside Elizabeth before she had finished speaking.

"This is my plan," she said quietly. "One of you gentlemen will unfasten one of the big headlights, while I take the other. We will then turn the lights in such a manner that those who are watching us will think the car is turning to go back to Oudjda. When the reflectors are turned backward, we will fasten them to the iron baggage shield. Then I will cut off the supply of water in the cylinders, and little by little the gas will become exhausted, and no more will be generated until we can use the lights for our own purposes again. The sentinels, thinking our car turned back toward Oudjda, will not be expecting us, and we can make a rush for the pass, with excellent chances of getting through."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried the general. "It is a masterpiece of a plan, *mon petit*, and I congratulate you on your intelligence and your bravery. You are a true son of France, and you shall lose nothing for your sharp wits!"

"Well, then, let's move together, *mon général*, for we must lose no time."

The general examined the watch on

his wrist and found the hour to be ten.

"You are right, *mon brave*. We must work quickly."

Taking his position to the left, he unscrewed the nut that held the mammoth reflector, and stood in readiness to turn with Elizabeth.

"Ready!" she said. "I will mark time slowly while you turn; and try to keep the proper distance between the lights, for we must furnish a creditable performance; and really deceive those cruel brutes."

Slowly, and in unison, they turned, shifting the lights so as not to reveal themselves, until the reverse position was acquired. Then with four stout straps taken from the tool box and prepared by the waiting officers, the headlights were lashed to the back of the car.

At that moment the first faint cries of the *Marocains* could be heard: "Yi yi yi yi yi yi yi yi!"

The party clambered back into the car and once more pressed forward into the night. But the blackness was so intense, and the contrast so fearful after having had that splendid path of light ahead, that a nervous trembling shook the valiant little chauffeur, and drops of icy sweat formed upon her dust-streaked brow. And then suddenly the fear was gone, and with it the trembling; for the old American war cry of her childhood clanged in her ears and the faces of two dear brothers rose before her straining eyes, while the oft-repeated admonition, "Be a sport!" stiffened her lax spine and created a glow of determination that warmed her shaking hands and sent new life into her fainting spirit.

The car crept silently and slowly along the invisible trail. Up, up, and always up, and slower, and yet more slowly.

"We are approaching now," she murmured to the general. "Another two

kilometers and we shall be among the enemy. As the headlights have gone out now, I am going to stop and replace them where they belong, so as to be able to light them the moment we are clear of the pass."

"Are you armed?" the general asked as they screwed the lights into place.

"*Mais oui, mon général.* I have a revolver, with eight cartridges in it. But I don't think we shall have much time for fighting, for I am going to break the world's record on speed when we reach the pass in the mountains, lights or no lights. The road is excellent after that for five kilometers, and then we are in El Aioun. Sit low in the car," she cautioned. "The car is naturally a low one, and if the *Marocains* shoot they will probably aim too high to do much damage."

Once more the long gray car slid gently forward, and all was silent save for the rushing of the mad wind and an occasional growl from Larbi. Nearer and nearer the car crept toward the narrow gateway that made the mountain pass almost impregnable in time of war; and the inmates of the car, crouching low, in alert silence, began to distinguish the smoldering fires on the hillside and to hear the bark of the jackals, pressing close to the camps.

Another kilometer was covered in silence and safety, and then Elizabeth breathed, "Now!" and with a tremendous leap the car sprang forward into the opening of the pass. The road was scarcely wide enough for two wagons to pass without danger to their wheels, and Elizabeth swung the Panhard into the middle of the road, which was distinctly visible for a short distance in the light of two fires, over which sheep were being barbecued.

For a hundred feet all was silent; then the ghastly "Yi yi yi yi yi yi yi" split the silence as lightning tears a storm cloud. There was a rushing of feet, the frightened neigh of terrified

horses, the snarling of camels and dogs, and the warning crack of a gun. Straight ahead the car plunged, whipping up clouds of gravel and sand and dust, swerving not a hair's breadth from the middle of the road, and gaining speed with every revolution of its flying wheels. Rifle shots in quick succession blazed from the right of the road, but did no apparent damage.

Then a perfect volley crashed over their heads. Two horsemen loomed just ahead, and with a hysterical "Be a sport!" sob, Elizabeth drew the shining revolver from her pocket and held it firmly in her right hand while her left gripped and controlled the wheel. Shots were fired from the rear of the car, and the horrid scream of a mortally wounded horse sent waves of sickness through Elizabeth.

One horseman whirled from the road, and as the car ran abreast of him, he swung his barbarous *matraque* and launched it at the flying car. But the chauffeur had divined his purpose, and, pressing persistently the siren pedal, sent blast after blast of deafening shrieks from that ear-splitting contrivance, causing the Arab's horse to rear and lunge in mad panic. There was a crashing, splintering noise, and one of the big side lanterns was wrenched from its support and hung tattered and limp.

"*Dieu qu'il fait chaud!*" sighed the general tranquilly. "And what a bore to soil this wonderful car with the débris of such vermin!"

Again the shots rang out, this time from the left. A sharp pain, and then a deadly numbness took possession of Elizabeth's left shoulder. For an instant the earth seemed singularly awry, and then slowly things righted themselves, and still the car raced on.

Larbi was whining gently, and sniffing the growing stain on the side of his mistress' coat.

The firing ceased suddenly, and except for the barking of dogs and the distant clattering of horses' feet on the rocks and shale of the mountainside, all was silent.

Elizabeth stopped the car and turned to ask if the others were unhurt. The general was humming a little tune as he bound up the wrist of one of the officers, which had been pierced by a rifle ball. The third occupant of the back seat was a huddled heap on the floor, motionless, if not lifeless.

Regardless of her own pain, she crept to the ground and hastily relighted the headlights, and then, once more in her seat, she turned the car loose down the steep incline that ends in El Aioun.

At twenty minutes to eleven the car was in the camp lines, and ten minutes later, after having given his orders and transferred his wounded officers to the ambulance corps, General Girardeau took the seat by Elizabeth's side and the car turned into the camel path that leads to Naima.

The pain in Elizabeth's arm had become almost intolerable, and it was only by gritting her teeth and bracing her whole body that she kept from losing consciousness. A deadly nausea forced her to unfasten the strap of her cap from beneath her chin and push the goggles up from her tortured face. Inequalities in the path caused the car to lurch from side to side in pain-racking lunges, and lower and lower slipped the shining braids of hair. The car pushed forward bravely through the heavy, dragging sand, and in dumb misery, that wiped out all sense of time and place, the sturdy little chauffeur moaned inaudibly: "Sport—sport—sport!"

A vigilant sentinel peremptorily aroused her into a consciousness of camp fires and peering faces. Automatically, she dropped the wheel and sent a blast from the siren that split the stillness of the slumbering camp.

Then, bringing the car to a standstill, she drooped against the general's shoulder, limp and nerveless.

"Mother of God!" roared the general. "It is a woman, this little devil of a chauffeur!" And with infinite tenderness he lifted the shivering woman from the car to the ground and carried her gently to the nearest open tent.

"Bring me instantly the *médecin en chef*!" he thundered to a rigid orderly. "Here is a woman wounded in the French cause, and by the twelve holy apostles she shall have all that an unworthy son of France can do for her! Bring brandy and cold water!" he commanded.

The tent was a whirl of flying soldiers and solicitous, grave-faced officers. While the surgeon cut away the blood-soaked sleeve and shoulder of Elizabeth's blouse, and bathed and bandaged an ugly, jagged wound in the fleshy part of the upper arm, the general whipped out orders in terse, tense tones. Reveille sounded, and the camp lined up in mathematical, precise companies. Rifles and bayonets gleamed menacingly in the flickering light of camp fires, and row after row of grim, determined faces shone out with a luminous pallor that bespoke a light within kindled from unquenchable fires.

The brandy and cold water, and the greater comfort of the bandaged arm and shoulder, brought a faint flush to Elizabeth's cheeks and lips, and except for a great weariness and a queer numbness in her body, all seemed well with the world again. General Girardeau approached her almost reverently, and, taking her small, disheveled head in his hands, he bent and kissed her brow with a graceful, Gallic gesture. Then, slipping one hand beneath her uninjured arm, he drew her outside the tent, in full view of the lined-up companies. Raising his gold-laced kepi from his bristling gray hair, he addressed his battalions.

"In the name of France and her glorious army, I call the sons of Marianne to witness this act of mine!"

Unpinning the rosette of the Legion of Honor, that made a scarlet patch on the breast of his uniform, he fastened it, with shaking fingers, on the sleeveless blouse of Elizabeth's dusty dress.

"Three salutes for the brave Frenchwoman who has accomplished this night a feat of such paramount bravery that I, a veteran of many conflicts, stand abased before her!"

Three deafening roars of applause followed the general's speech; applause of such sincere admiration that Elizabeth's face flamed red as her ribbon, and two tears glittered on her cheeks. She raised a hand in remonstrance, and at the sight of her timid, shrinking figure the uproar ceased instantly. Drawing herself to her full height, she lifted her right hand in military salute, first to the general, and then to the

army, and unfastening the rosette from her breast she kissed it, and said, smiling whimsically:

"I am no daughter of France, *mes amis*, but a free-born American woman. But in the name of France and my husband, who is French, and who has served his country in Tonkin, Fez, and Tangiers, I accept the ovation you have tendered me. And if I have in the most humble degree paid an infinitesimal portion of the mighty debt that each American owes to the glorious Jean Paul Marie, Marquis de Lafayette, I am happier than mere words can ever express. *Vive la France!*" she cried.

Forgetting her wound and her pain, she held the rosette high above her erect head, crying, again and again, "*Vive la France!*" Thrilling and vibrant came the answer to her call, and the "*Marseillaise*" burst from a thousand lusty throats as the ranks broke into march and wheeled toward the desert.



REALITY

I SANG of love before you came to me.

Now I am living love and sing no more
The early songs like pink shells on the shore,
Caught by great waves and hurled into the sea.
No more my heart has room for minstrelsy,
Like moonbeams swooning on your chamber floor,
Like shadows of frail flowers by Life's door,
All lacking, somehow, this Reality.

Oh, when I sing of love again, each word
Must hold wine of your kisses and your tears,
Must hold warmth of your body and perfume
From silken hair that in your dreams was stirred—
And still keep thrilling secrets of the years,
Hiding away each precious bit of bloom.

GLENN WARD DRESBACH.



STORIES OF THE SUPER-WOMEN

Albert Payson Terhune

Find the Woman. You will find her in almost every generation, in almost every country, in almost every big city—the super-woman. She is not the typical adventuress; she is not a genius. The reason for her strange power is occult. When philosophers have thought they had segregated the cause—the formula—what you will—in one particular super-woman or group of super-women, straightway some new member of the clan has arisen who wields equal power with her notable sisters, but who possesses none of the traits that made them irresistible. And the seekers of formulas are again at sea. What makes the super-woman? Is it beauty? Cleopatra and Rachel were homely. Is it daintiness? Marguerite de Valois washed her hands but twice a week. Is it wit? Pompadour and Du Barry were avowedly stupid in conversation. Is it youth? Diane de Poitiers and Ninon de l'Enclos were wildly adored at sixty. Is it the subtle quality of feminism? George Sand, who numbered her admirers by the score—poor Chopin in their foremost rank—was not only ugly, but disgustingly mannish. So was Semiramis. The nameless charm is found almost as often in the masculine, “advanced” woman as in the delicate, ultrafeminine damsel. Here are the stories of super-women who conquered at will. Some of them smashed thrones; some were content with wholesale heart-smashing. Wherein lay their secret? Or rather, their secrets? For seldom did any two of them follow the same plan of campaign.

PEG WOFFINGTON

Irish Heart Conjurer

A THROG of people—bare-foot peasants, modish idlers, tradesfolks, riffraff—stood in a Dublin courtyard one day in 1727, providing the much-admired “sea of upturned faces.” All eyes were raised, all necks were back bent. Every one was looking aloft to where a taut wire was stretched between two post tops.

Along the wire walked a harlequin, taking mincing dance steps and balancing across the shoulders a pole from whose extremities dangled two huge baskets. To make the feat the more interesting by adding a spice of possible peril, announcement had been made that each basket contained a live child.

The chance of a triple tragedy in the

event of a misstep made the tight-wire walk a right diverting spectacle, and thrilling withal, to the good folk of Dublin. But, halfway between the two extremity posts, still a new element of interest was added.

For, at that point, the top suddenly popped off one of the baskets, and a big-eyed, laughing face beamed down, over the edge, at the crowd. The face of a seven-year-old child—a girl. A roar of applause followed upon the youngster's unrehearsed appearance.

Thus did Peg Woffington, queen of her century's actresses and consummate heart conjurer, make her professional debut.

Peg—her full first name, which nobody dreamed of using, was Margaret

—was the daughter of an Irish brick-layer who had one point in common with certain modernists in that he was rabidly opposed to all doctors.

And the medical guild had in due time its revenge on the sacrilegious brick artist. For once, when Woffington fell ill, he fiercely refused to have a physician summoned. And he rapidly grew better. As her husband was convalescing, Mrs. Woffington sought to make assurance doubly certain by calling in a doctor. The pill juggler looked at the invalid and pronounced him out of danger. Next day Woffington died.

Peg was just learning to walk at the time of her lamented father's tilt with the cult of Æsculapius. She and her baby sister, Mary, at once set about helping to earn their own living, by toddling on either side of their mother when the widow hawked watercress through the streets, and shrilly piping in duet the virtues of her wares.

To Dublin, when Peg was seven, came one Madame Violante, with a troupe of tumblers and rope dancers. Peg was apprenticed to Madame Violante. But her term of service as a baby acrobat was short. Her employer had better use for her.

It was Madame Violante who originated the ever-since-popular custom of producing popular plays and operas with child actors filling all the rôles. Her "Liliputian Troupe" scored a big success in Dublin and the provinces. Much of this success was due to Peg, who almost invariably was cast for old-woman parts, and who "doubled in the brass" by doing quaint little step dances between the acts.

It was cruelly hard work for a growing child; nor was the early eighteenth-century theater the very best sort of nursery and moral training school for little girls. But apart from other and less creditable lessons acquired, she learned stage presence and practically every art and trick of the profession.

From the "Liliputian Troupe," Peg graduated into the more lucrative and equally moral pursuit of theater orange vender. In slack seasons, when no cargo of oranges chanced to have landed recently from the Americas, she acted, off and on; playing, at twelve, mature rôles in provincial theater comedies, and exhibiting a rollicking humor that carried her audiences by assault. At seventeen, she was playing—at seven dollars and fifty cents a week—*Ophelia* and other exacting parts.

Incidentally, on both side of the foot-light candles—as actress and as orange girl in the pit—she had long since made herself the toast of the Dublin beaux. She was pretty—though not strikingly so. She had a ready, and occasionally flaying, Irish wit. She had, too, the magic, if still undeveloped, fascination of the super-woman. As to her morals—they were the morals of any and every other girl of her environment and upbringing. She was quite as good as she knew how to be. There was not a grain of real vice in her whole cosmos.

But there was a blazing ambition; an ambition that was cramped and choked in the miserable, makeshift provincial playhouses. She burned to be a famous actress. There was no chance for her in Ireland. So she came to London.

It was a case of burning her bridges behind her. For she carried a worn purse that held seventeen shillings. And the not-overnew dress she wore was her sole wardrobe. These were her tangible assets. On this capital and on genius and pluck and ambition and good looks and the charm that was daily growing more and more irresistible, Peg relied to keep her going.

To manager after manager she trudged. Not one would find work for her. In all, she made nineteen applications. And she scored just precisely nineteen rank failures.

Finally, half starved and wholly dis-

couraged, she succeeded in interesting the manager of the Covent Garden Theater. And he gave her, or sold her, the chance she sought—the chance to appear before a London audience.

Her first appearance on the metropolitan stage was all that was needed to prove her worth. At once she caught the public fancy. Soon she found herself the most popular actress in England.

An air of mingled sadness and gaiety in her stage work, an audacity and fresh youthfulness—and the mystic charm—carried her straight to the front. At this period she touched nothing but comedy—at which she had no peer—and preferably played male rôles. Masculine attire set forth her stunning figure, and she played devil-may-care, boyish parts as could no other woman.

One night, after the first act of "The Constant Couple," wherein, clad in small-clothes and hose, she was playing *Sir Harry Wildair*, Peg ran laughing and triumphant into the greenroom. There she chanced to find her bitterest friend and rival, Mistress Kitty Clive, a clever but somewhat homely actress. Said Peg, in delight:

"They applauded me to the echoes! Faith, I believe half the men in the house thought I was really a boy."

"Perhaps," sneered envious Kitty. "But it is certain that at least half of them knew you weren't."

Peg stopped short in her gay laugh and eyed Kitty's plain visage quizzically.

"Mistress Clive," observed Peg, in irrelevant reflection, "did you ever stop to consider how much utterly useless modesty an ugly woman is responsible for unloading upon this poor world of ours?"

Kitty did not again cross swords with Peg. Indeed, after the first encounter, few people did.

The fops, the wits, the macaronis, the

bloods, the Corinthians—all had discovered Peg long before this time. She was their darling, their idol. As this poor article is too brief in scope to contain a transcript of London's Social and Club Register of the day, most of Peg's minor conquests must be passed over without a word. One or two alone stand out as worth a few sentences.

Macklin, *matinée* favorite and really great actor, fell heels over head in love with her. So did Hallam, the doctor author. Macklin, having no hope of winning Peg's favor, was content to watch over her and to guard her like a faithful bulldog. Hallam was not so humble.

Peg did not inherit her father's hatred for doctors, for she flirted lazily with Hallam and amused herself with his admiration. In time she tired of him and frankly told him so.

Hallam, lacking the game, sought the name. Furious at his dismissal, he was still eager to be considered a successful wooer of the famous actress. So he took to boasting loudly at White's and the Cocoa Tree that Peg cared for him alone, and that she had written him reams of burningly ardent love letters.

Peg heard of the boast and was foolish enough to run to the devoted Macklin with the story, entreating him to punish the braggart.

Macklin did not wait to write a challenge, or even go home for his sword, which he did not happen to be wearing that day. Snatching up his cane, he rushed to a near-by coffeehouse where he knew Hallam was likely to be found at that hour. There he discovered the author doctor drinking with a circle of friends, to whom he was decanting upon Peg's worship of himself.

Macklin sprang at Hallam, seized him by the throat, and caned him unmercifully. Hallam writhed free and whipped out his sword. Macklin, forgetting that he himself was wielding a cane and not a sword, parried Hallam's

first thrust and lunged for the doctor's face.

The ferule of the cane pierced Hallam's left eyeball and penetrated to his brain, killing him instantly—an odd climax to one of history's oddest duels.

Macklin was placed on trial for his life. But he was promptly acquitted. And Peg's renown glowed afresh, because, through her, a man had died.

A pamphlet, written by still another vehement admirer, contains a description of Peg Woffington, written about the time of Hallam's taking off. Part of this word picture is worth repeating verbatim. You will note that, though contemporary, it is in the past tense. Here it is:

Her eyes were black as jet, and, while they beamed with ineffable luster, at the same time revealed all the sentiments of her heart and showed that native good sense resided in their fair possessor. Her eyebrows were full and arched, and had a peculiar property of inspiring love or striking terror. Her cheeks were vermillioned with nature's best rouge, and outvied all the labored works of art.

Her nose was somewhat of the aquiline, and gave her a look full of majesty and dignity. Her lips were of the color of coral and the softness of down; and her mouth displayed such beauties as would thaw the very bosom of an anchorite. Her teeth were white and even. Her hair was of a bright auburn color. Her whole form was beautiful to excess.

In the heyday of her glory, Peg went "to drink a dish of tea" with a party of friends one afternoon. Among the guests was a slender little commercial man, a wine merchant, in fact; shrewd, stingy, and smug. How such a character as his could have awakened the very faintest response in impulsive, big-hearted Peg's is one of the innumerable mysteries of hearts.

But at first glance she loved the little man; loved him as never before she had loved, and as she would never love again. She had met the love of her life.

She asked to have him introduced. The little vintner, tickled that the great Mistress Woffington should have deigned to notice an unknown nonentity, was duly brought up and presented.

Peg, her head swimming, did not at once catch his name and bade him repeat it. Obediently, the dapper youth replied:

"David Garrick, madam."

In the talk that ensued, Peg led Garrick to talk about himself—a never-difficult task. He told her that he hated his trade and that he was not making money thereby. Peg, appraising the man's appearance as well as a woman newly in love could hope to, saw that, though short, he was graceful and strikingly handsome. Also, that he had a marvelous voice.

Abruptly, she broke in on his soliloquy by suggesting that he go on the stage. Garrick stared. She spoke of the glories of a star's life. Garrick yawned. She mentioned that successful actors drew large salaries. Garrick sat up and began to listen. When she went on to speak of the fabulous receipts that awaited a star, Garrick feverishly consented to her plan.

Peg set to work, using to the straining point all her boundless theatrical influence. She got Garrick a chance. She coached him in the rudiments of acting. She found that the little wine seller had a Heaven-sent gift for the stage. So did the managers. So, in short order, did the public.

Garrick's success was as instantaneous as had been Peg's own. Peg rejoiced unspeakably in his success. So did he. The lofty motives that actuated Garrick's stage work may be guessed at from this entry in his diary, October 20, 1741:

Last night played *Richard the Third* to the surprise of all. I shall make nearly three hundred pounds a year as an actor, and that is what I really dote on.

But he made infinitely more than the prophesied one thousand, five hundred dollars a year. For he speedily became an actor manager. His business training and his notorious stinginess were splendid assets. Money flowed in, beyond his wildest dreams of avarice. And he held on to it all.

Peg was inordinately proud of his achievements. So was Garrick. Peg loved him to distraction. He graciously consented to be loved. Indeed, it is probable that he cared for Peg as much as he could care for anybody except David Garrick. A swarm of women fell in love with him when he made his stage success. In spite of this, he still loved Peg. Even if not exclusively.

Then Peg and Garrick appeared for the time as co-stars. And, with him, she returned to the scene of her early struggles at Dublin. At the Smock Alley Theater there, the two appeared in repertoire.

The pair were an enormous hit. So much so that they were forced, by popular clamor, to play straight through the summer. It was one of the hottest summers on record, but great crowds jammed the theater at each performance. An epidemic swept Dublin. A good many of the playgoers caught the infection at the playhouse and died; which caused the epidemic to receive the sinister nickname, "the Garrick fever."

Peg was no less popular than was her colleague. Together they toured Ireland, then came back to London, as openly avowed lovers. They were engaged to be married; but the marriage was from time to time postponed. Always at Garrick's suggestion.

Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, a suitor for Peg's favor at this time, was the author—among half a bookful of odes, sonnets, and so forth, to her charms—of "Lovely Peggy," a popular song "hit" of the day, a stanza of which runs:

Once more I'll tune the vocal shell,
To hills and dales my passion tell,
A flame which time can never quell,
That burns for lovely Peggy.
Ye greater bards the lyre should hit,
To say what subject is more fit,
Than to record the sparkling wit
And bloom of lovely Peggy.

But Sir Charles wooed her in vain. She had thoughts for no one else but Garrick. One day, reproached by the poet with her greater regard for his rival, and not wishing to cause needless pain to the loser, Peg sought to evade the charge by saying that she had not seen Garrick for an age.

"Nay," contradicted the luckless Sir Charles, "I know you saw him only yesterday."

"Well," she retorted, "and is not that an age?"

She and Garrick had a singular rule for maintaining their antemarital establishment. It was arranged—by Garrick—that each should bear the monthly expenses alternately. When it was Peg's turn, it was noticeable that much better food was provided and that many more dinner guests were invited to the house than during the alternate months when Garrick was running the place.

Once, during a Garrick month, a crowd of people dropped in unexpectedly to tea. Garrick eyed them with scarce-disguised hostility, Peg was delighted to see them. But no more so than if their call had come on her month for paying the bills, for she was lavishly hospitable, and was always generous—even prodigal to a fault; traits that caused her thrifty lover much pain.

To-day, as usual, Peg brewed the tea. Glancing at his own new-filled cup, as Macbeth might have glared at the imaginary Banquo, Garrick groaned aloud:

"Peg, you've made this tea so strong it's as red as blood. Zounds, ma'am, d'ye think 'tis to be bought at a penny the pound that you squander it so?"

It has ever been the fashion of romantic chroniclers, in writing of this

strange union, to paint Peg as a suffering saint and Garrick as a crank. The latter picture is flawless. The former, unluckily, is not.

For, though Peg loved the actor manager and—temporarily—loved no one else, yet it was not in her super-woman nature to rest meekly content with the attentions of one man. Even though that man chanced to be the celebrated Davy Garrick. Running through the warp of her love was a woof of flirtations.

For one instance, Lord Darnley, a rich and notorious Piccadilly gallant, proclaimed himself her adorer. Flattered at so famous a nobleman's love, Peg flirted outrageously with Darnley. She even denied to him that she cared for Garrick.

Once Darnley found Garrick's wig in Peg's boudoir and railed at her infidelity to himself. Peg explained that she had borrowed the actor's wig and had brought it home in order to practice in it a masculine rôle she was soon to play at the Drury Lane.

Garrick, in jealous wrath, protested against her affair with Darnley. So she swore to Garrick that she had dismissed his rival—and gayly continued to meet Darnley on the sly. In time, Garrick found her out and the discovery led to their separation. Afterward, in remorse, Peg is said to have dropped Darnley. But then, as usual, it was too late for her renunciation to do any good except to punish herself.

Time after time Garrick had set back the date of the wedding. When at last the Darnley crisis came, Peg asked him frankly if he meant to keep his pledge or not. He replied gloomily that he did. And he went out and bought a wedding ring. He sighed in utter misery as he slipped the gold loop on her finger. Out flashed Peg's Irish temper.

"If you had ten times the wealth and repute and ability that the world credits you with," she declared, "I would not

become your wife after this silent confession."

Almost at once she repented her rash words of release. But Garrick held her to them. He considered himself freed. And they parted. Peg sent back all Garrick's presents. He refused to return hers—they included a pair of diamond shoe buckles she had given him—on the tender plea that they would serve him as reminders of her.

Peg wrote an angry letter, pointing out very clearly the wide gulf between sentiment and graft, and telling Garrick on exactly which side of that gulf his action in regard to the presents placed him. Garrick retaliated by blackening her name on every occasion. She made no reply to any of his dirty slurs, nor spoke of him save in praise.

Thus ended the great love of Peg's life. But there were a host of minor loves to help take its place. Next came Spanger Berry, a fiery Irish actor who, to revenge Peg's supposed wrongs, did his level best on the stage to crowd Garrick out of several of the latter's favorite rôles. He did not wholly succeed in this lovely attempt, but he caused Garrick many an hour of uneasiness, and wounded him severely by causing a drop in the actor manager's box-office receipts.

Then came a succession. To quote a biographer who wrote while Peg's name was yet fresh:

An infatuated swain swore that if she did not return his love, he would hang, drown, or shoot himself; and in order not to be responsible for his suicide, she consented to listen to his sighs. Then there came along a gentleman with money who won her affection. Another next presented and outbid the former. Another offered, and she received him in her train.

A fifth appeared, and was well received. A sixth declared his suit, and his suit was not rejected. In a word, a multitude of love's votaries paid their adorations to the shrine of their fair saint, and their fair saint was not cruel.

Then, according to the same chron-

icler and another, came into Peg's life "a personage." There is no hint as to his identity. Whether she was true to him or not is debatable. But she soon discovered that he had grown tired of her. It was borne to her ears that he was paying court to an heiress; intending to break with Peg, by degrees, if his suit were successful.

The heiress gave a masked ball in honor of her birthday. Peg gained admittance, in male costume, to the affair, and contrived to become her rival's partner in a minuet.

When she straightway poured so many and such vile stories anent the gentleman's character into the lady's ears that the latter fainted and the ball broke up in confusion.

But Peg had gained her aim, by hopelessly discrediting with the heiress the recreant lover. The match was broken off. Peg felt herself right cozily revenged.

The next wooer was a "person." Not a "personage." He was Owen McSwinny, a buffoon. He was the premier clown of his day and a local celebrity.

McSwinny was fairly well to do. And, when he died soon afterward, it was found that he had left his whole estate—some two hundred pounds a year—to Peg.

It was not long after this that Richard Brinsley Sheridan, then in his prime, engaged Peg at four hundred pounds a season, to play at his theater. Sheridan was fervid in his admiration of the Irish beauty. Perhaps this fact, as well as the marked success she scored in his plays, led "The Rivals" author to double her salary after the first season.

Yearly she grew more popular with her audiences. Having won a matchless reputation as a comedian, she turned for a time to tragic characters, and won thereby a wholly new reputation as one of England's foremost tragedians. But comedy was her forte. And to it she returned.

Peg always vowed she hated the society of her own sex; a lucky thing for her, since she was not received by ladies of quality, as were many of her fellow actresses, and since her sharp tongue and the fact that men went wild over her made her hated by her fellow actresses. But her popularity with men endured, and she wasted few tears over women's dislikes. Few super-women have been popular with their own sex.

Peg was elected president of the famed Beefstake Club, and she always presided at the board in man's attire.

All this time she had been supporting her mother in a luxury undreamed of in the days of the medicophobic bricklayer. And she had educated and jealously safeguarded her younger sister, Mary.

Mary became engaged to Captain George Cholmondeley, son of the Earl of Cholmondeley, a glittering match for a bricklayer's daughter. The earl was justly indignant and posted off to Peg to break off the affair, if need be, by bribing her and the entire tribe of Woffington.

Peg met the irate old fellow with the full battery of her charm. In a trice she had him bewildered, then half relenting. Feebly he tried to bluster. Peg cut him short with:

"My lord, I'm the one to complain; not you. For now I'll have two beggars, instead of one, to feed."

It was a true forecast, for the earl, despite Peg's blandishments, withheld for a time his check book. And in the interim she gave the new-wed pair a house to live in and the money to run it.

And now for the last "big scene" of Peg's stage career. For some time she had been ailing. But she kept on with her acting.

On the evening of May 17, 1757, when she was at the very acme of her career, she played *Rosalind* at Covent Garden. Throughout the comedy she was at her scintillant best. The house

was hers. Wave after wave of frantic applause greeted her, as, still in *Rosalind's* male habiliments, she stepped before the curtain, flushed and smiling, to deliver the epilogue.

Gayly stretching out her arms to pit and stalls, she began the familiar lines. With a gesture of infinite coquetry she continued:

"I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me; complexions that liked me—that liked me——"

She faltered, whitened under her make-up, skipped three full lines, and came to the "tag":

"—when I make curtsy—bid me—bid me—farewell!"

The last line haltingly spoken, she threw her hands high in air and screamed in a voice of abject terror:

"Oh, God! Oh, God!"

It was a prayer, not an oath. Reeling, the actress staggered to the wings, and there fell, swooning, leaving the packed house behind her in an uproar of confusion.

Kindly arms bore her from the stage she was never more to tread. Next day, all London knew that Mistress Peg Woffington had been stricken with paralysis and that from the neck down she was dead. Only the keen-witted brain lived, to realize the wreck of the beautiful body.

Sorrowing crowds blocked the street in front of her house for days, momentarily expecting news of her death. But Peg did not die. She did not die until three tedious years had passed.

Little by little she partly regained the use of her body. But she was feeble. Her rich beauty was wiped out as an acid-soaked sponge might efface a portrait.

Out of the gay life that had been the breath of her nostrils, feeble as an old woman, plain of face and halting of speech—she nevertheless retained enough of the wondrous ancient charm to enslave another adorer.

The newest—and last—wooer was Colonel Caesar, of the Guards. On learning that Peg in her stricken state had infatuated the gallant colonel, a coffeehouse wit sized up the situation by cruelly quoting:

"*Aut Caesar, aut nullus.*"

It was a vile thing to say. And Caesar hunted up the humorist, so runs the story, and thrashed him within an inch of his life.

Some time later, Tate Wilkinson, an "impersonator" of that era—yes, there were pests on the earth, even in those days—was scheduled to give a series of humorous impersonations of famous actors and actresses at the Drury Lane, then managed and partly owned by David Garrick.

Peg feared she might be held up to ridicule by the mimicry. The fear preyed on her mind, to a pathetic extent. Colonel Caesar went to the theater and there informed Garrick that if he permitted Wilkinson to impersonate Mistress Woffington, the colonel would first give him a public caning and would then call him out.

The impersonation of Peg had been mysteriously lost from the imitator's repertoire when the performance was given.

Peg died in 1760, at the age of forty. She left more than five thousand pounds. She left it to charity. And, as a testimonial to her, a range of low-roofed, wistaria-covered cottages was built for the exclusive use of the poor. The dwellings were known as "The Margaret Woffington Cottages."

Samson's costume would start a panic on modern Broadway, yet it was doubtless deemed correct in his time. Queen Elizabeth's table manners would cause her speedy ejection from any civilized restaurant, yet she was sixteenth century's model for etiquette. George Washington's spelling would not pass muster in a primary school, though

in 1776 he was regarded as a man of high education. While as for Lady Godiva——

New times, new ways. Won't you remember that, in dealing with Peg Woffington? She was a product—and a *fine* product—of her generation and surroundings. Think of her only as an

unfortunate, warm-hearted, beautiful girl, whom men adored almost as much for her lovable qualities as for her siren fascinations.

She merits a pedestal in the temple of super-women. If I have failed to establish her right to it, the fault is mine, not hers.



IN EXILE

I.

THE sunlight wakes me early
 To a sky all gold and blue,
 And the new land treats me fairly,
 And I've got good work to do.
 But it's oh, for the feel of the wave on the keel,
 Or my foot in the grass of the glen—
 And I'm sick for the hills of Antrim,
 That I'll see—the Lord knows when!

II.

I've the jewel of a letter
 Between my hand and my heart,
 And I call no man my better
 Though he play the king, his part.
 For the words are scrolled in fire and gold
 When my darlin' holds the pen—
 But I'm sick for the hills of Antrim,
 That I'll see—the Lord knows when!

III.

Green land of tears and laughter,
 I'm wearyin' for your shores.
 But I'll have the luck I'm after,
 And the girl my soul adores.
 For there's dreams a few betimes come true
 Though a man mayn't just know when.
 So here's to the hills of Antrim,
 That I'll see some day again!

CAROLINE DUER.



THE dawn wind was just beginning to steal down the cañon as the man left the pool. Hardly perceptible as yet, but growing momentarily stronger, it breathed in his face, cool, dry, sterile, bringing with it scents of far-off pines and the snows on the high peaks.

It blew every morning for the space of half an hour, beginning just when the stars commenced to pale in the silvering sky. The man could never determine whether it was the herald of the day or the final breath of the departing night that laid a cooling hand on the foreheads of sleepers, lulling them to a deeper oblivion lest they catch a hint of the secrets that are exposed for an instant in the transition between darkness and light.

He was inclined to believe that it was the latter, that it was the draft of the robe of passing night; there was about it such a sense of warning, a silent call to the creature and activities of the dark to hide, lest they be caught by the advancing day.

He lifted his face to meet it, feeling it blow coolly about his wet hair, as if blowing through his very brain. Even in himself he had noted how the mysticisms, the phantasies, the delicate imaginings of the night fled before the dawn wind, hurrying to hide themselves

under the rocks of the more commonplace, accepted perceptions he kept for the hours of daylight.

That night had been full of these phantasms. Under the spell of the moon and the silence they had rioted in unusual freedom. The day had been hot with the parching heat of the desert, which had swept up over the mountains, lasting long after the sun had set, and the man had given up all attempts at sleep. The mountains, too, had been awake; he had heard the deer browsing in the chaparral, the bark of the foxes out on the slopes, the rustle of all the shy, wild creatures stealing through the brush. As the night had advanced, the very rocks had seemed to stir faintly and to breathe their relief in the growing coolness. The stream had been more than usually loquacious, babbling unceasingly with a strangely human note, like people—five people—whispering laughing secrets. He had almost heard what they said, it had been so plain; just the next moment and he would have caught it. But that next moment had never come; he had known it would not, for he had listened so often. Perhaps they speak a different tongue, those people who laugh in the streams at midnight.

Toward morning he had gone down to the pool to bathe. It was the largest pool in the cañon. At its upper end a

waterfall thudded down, lashing the surface to foam, but where the big rock jutted out, undercut by the age-long flow of the waters, it was deep and still. Stripping off his clothes, he lay out along the rock that was yet warm from the stored heat of the long hours of sunshine; he could feel the hot stone sucking the beads of moisture from his skin. Just above him a yucca stalk shot up from its rosette of spiny leaves, rattling its pods mysteriously in the still air. It was the only definite form to be seen; all else was just glamour and shadow and pale light.

It was a night of wonderful moonlight that poured down, clear and yellow, filtering through the black tracery of the leaves. The sun would have shone through them, he thought, taking on their color as it came, but the moonlight slipped between, cold and untainted.

Never before had he felt so strongly the inherent friendliness of those mountains, never before been so completely at one with them, so confident of his welcome. That the rocks and trees did not bend and nod as he passed was not because of indifference, but merely because they accepted him so freely; one does not rise when one's brother comes by. He wished the stream would tell him what it was saying with so much gentle laughter; even in the fall those people were whispering. He leaned over the edge of the rock, looking down at his reflection in the brown water below; it shone up at him, the arms and shoulders silvered by the moonlight, the face in shadow beneath the dim outline of the hair.

It was strange that the eyes, so deeply shaded, should be reflected so plainly. Some chance ray of light must have been caught in them, for, as they glanced back at him, he had a curious sense of their belonging to some one else. He must have been smiling unawares, too, for he could have sworn

that he caught the gleam of teeth. Probably it was a shifting pebble on the stream bed, but for an instant it had seemed as if some one, some being not entirely human, some presiding genius of the rocks and waters, was smiling up at him from beneath the surface with a friendly regard.

He laughed to himself at the fancy; to be really interesting it should have been some nymph or naiad who greeted him. But this was an obviously masculine figure, and its welcome was merely friendly, as one who says: "Come in. You are one of us."

That was the worst of a reflection, he thought; it could show you only yourself, after all.

He stood up, still gazing downward, and the reflection retreated below the surface, but he could still see the flash of the teeth, the glow of the eyes, strangely lifelike under the magic of the moon. Well, it was something to be on such good terms even with oneself. Then he dived, down under the silver surface sheen, into the crystal depths that were vibrant with the thud of the waterfall, half expecting, so strong had been the illusion, to feel the grasp of another hand on his.

He was smiling at himself now, under the cooling dawn wind, as he strode back to his camp. And yet—why not? Why should there not be such beings as he had fancied he had seen? Denizens of another world, a world of the insides of things, of the within of those rocks and waters of which he could see only the surface. He did not actually know that there were not, and he could never bring himself to that comfortable state, in which most people seemed to dwell, of a contemptuous disbelief in all that he did not know.

There was another life than his own all about him here in the mountains, he knew that at least. A life of a certain unthinking joy, it ran in the veins of the rocks like a secret wine. At times,

if you did not look, you could catch a glimpse of it, but if you turned your head, it was gone, and only the surface of things met your eye with their baffling simplicity.

The man was aware that, in many ways, he was sadly lacking in common sense. But anything might be possible, it seemed, up here in these half-barren, sun-steeped heights, reared high above the affairs of men. And especially at this hour, more mysterious in its flat half tones and pallid grayness than even the sorcery of the full night.

Then, glancing forward along the trail, he saw the girl.

She was coming swiftly and silently, almost dancing her way, moving with a thistledown lightness that made her seem as if she were being blown gently along by the breath of the dawn wind. She was clad in dull browns and greens, looking so much a creature of her environment, a spirit of the woods, that for an instant the man wondered if she, too, were not a mere illusion, a chance association of leaf and branch, of gray light and grayer shadow.

Then he saw that it was the sick girl from the cabin farther up the cañon.

For a moment, as she saw him, she wavered, with an instinct of flight, flushing as if she had been discovered in an action of which she was ashamed. Then she smiled, and came on with the mischievous friendliness of one about to impart a secret.

"Don't tell!" She laughed, a finger on her lips. "They don't know it. They are all asleep, and they think I am, too."

The man smiled at her, too much surprised to speak. It seemed impossible that this radiant creature, all in greens and browns, her hair tumbling about her shoulders, her mouth red and laughing, full of the shy impudence of a wild thing of the woods, could be the

girl whom he had seen so often, fretful and pallid, lying dispiritedly in her hammock.

"I am going to the pool to bathe," she went on breathlessly. "They would be horrified if they knew. I come every morning. This blessed dawn wind wakes me. It makes them sleep the more soundly, but it calls me. I simply can't resist it—it calls me so. I am up and off and back again before they wake. It's my only chance to be alone—to be myself."

To the man it seemed hardly real; it was all just a trick of the mysterious graying light. Her little explanation, meant, as he saw, more to quiet her own lingering scruples than to give him information, passed him by, and his mind seized on the one point that was connected with his own trend of thought.

"To the pool?" he said, smiling mysteriously. "Did you know there was some one in the pool?"

Her face fell in a woeful disappointment. "Some one at the pool? How dare they steal my hour?"

"Not at the pool," he corrected, with a humorous gravity. "In the pool. Look under the big rock."

For an instant the color flamed in her cheeks, and he smiled as he thought of what must be in her mind. He could picture the reflection the pool must cast back to her—the dusky hair tumbling over the moon-silvered shoulders and breasts as she leaned over the rock— That was the pity of it—in a pool one can see only one's own reflection.

Then she faced him with the flaunting shamelessness of a flower.

"What—you know?"

"But I'll never tell," he promised. And with a step so light that the only sign of her passing was the tracks she left upon the sand, she sped past him and down the cañon.

It was afternoon when the man passed the cabin. The girl was lying in her hammock under the oaks, pale and still, her face showing the fretfulness of the fever that was consuming her. She looked dull and lifeless; there was about her a hint of the physical squalor inseparable from disease. Her eyes roamed restlessly about her, like the eyes of a trapped animal that, almost despairing of release, was yet alert to seize any chance. It seemed impossible that she could be the same creature, vital and brilliant, whom he had seen under the dawn.

He lingered a moment with a kindly inquiry, to which she replied listlessly and, apparently, with no shadow of recollection of their morning meeting. But that, he reflected, was probably because her sister was watching her with affectionate fussiness. The wild thing of the waning night was gone, hiding somewhere from the blazing sunlight and the family fatuities. Only the shell remained, and, looking at her, the man wondered how much longer that frail thing would last; it was surely time they took her down. Yet it would be cruel, he felt, remembering her as he had seen her that morning, to take her down to the copper-colored valley, swimming in violet haze, that lay outstretched five thousand feet below.

The girl's sister turned and walked with him as he passed on. She was a large, chatty woman, full of a commonplace kindness, eager to feed people, to make them comfortable, and utterly unaware that they might have other needs than these.

She was troubled about the girl, who did not seem to "pick up" as she had expected her to do. She was going to take her down next day, she was so worried about her. Probably the altitude was too great. She repeated that sentence as if it were a mental prop on which she was leaning in a time of perplexity, thankful to it for being

so comfortably comprehensible. Yes, probably the altitude was too great.

So they were going to take the girl down, the man thought, take her away from her one little dawn hour of life and freedom. Probably that was why she was so unusually dispirited that afternoon; most likely they had told her.

There was something more that the sister seemed to want to say. The man knew that she had not followed him merely to tell him that the girl was worse; that any one could see for himself, though exactly how much worse no one would admit.

There was something the sister had not said, something she did not quite know how to say. Possibly she did not even quite know what it was she wanted to say; the man could feel her warm, comfortable mind coiling upon itself in its gestative efforts to bring forth a new idea.

"No—sister doesn't seem to pick up," she repeated. "Of course, she's weak—very weak—" She hesitated, then went on as if excusing something mildly disgraceful. "I suppose it's the altitude—but—well—she has *notions*."

She looked searchingly at the man, as if she suspected him of being, in some way, contributory to those notions, or at least capable of entertaining them himself.

"What kind of notions?" he asked. He suspected that he really knew, but he instinctively rallied to the girl's defense; the compact of the mountains, the compact of silence and secrecy, was upon him.

"Oh—just ideas. I'm afraid we may have trouble to get her to go down. She seems just set on staying up here," the sister answered, adjusting her hairpins with a nervousness unusual to her. "She has queer ideas about the rocks and the river—especially the river. She talks to it—I mean *about* it—as if—as if— Of course there's nothing to

it all—everybody knows all about rocks and rivers." She turned on him suddenly with a point-blank: "Am I not right?"

"Why—just exactly what do you mean?" he parried, with a smiling evasiveness.

She had known that he would not answer, but his refusal to do so irritated her. Of course there was nothing to it all; it was just fanciful nonsense. If the girl had ever shown any signs of the writing fever, she would put it down to that—it would have been a relief to be able to label it. Whether the man answered or not, she knew that there was nothing to it, but she would have liked him to answer—just what she did not know, but something she could have stamped on with her comfortable common sense. The thing that angered her was that she did not know anything; there was not even sufficient mental ground to stamp on.

The man went on down to the pool for his afternoon bath. Seen thus under the pitiless light of the day, it was a different place from the eerie haunt of the hours of night. The cañon was all gold and brown under the blazing vault of the sky, which looked incapable of ever softening sufficiently to permit a cloud; the light beat in everywhere, searching and inescapable.

The fall bustled down, hurrying importantly, a note of utility in its clatter. The pool was clear and brown, every pebble plainly to be seen, a place of mere rocks and waters, shadowless, unable to hide the most intangible of secrets.

As the man splashed about, a face rose over a rock, a brown, boyish face under a shock of tousled hair; the mouth was open, and the eyes distended, gazing down on the man with a sort of delighted horror. Then the awe and affright suddenly left them, and the face fell into disgusted disil-

lusionment as the boy recognized the swimmer.

"Aw—why, it's just you!" he exclaimed.

The man looked up and saw that it was the girl's younger brother.

"Hello, kid—of course it's me. Who did you think it was?"

The boy sat on the rock, kicking at it aimlessly, a trifle sullen and hostile, as if he felt he had been defrauded.

"Nothing. I—— It was just something sis said—about the pool. I guess she was fooling. Girls are always fooling. They make me sick."

"They'll make you worse before you're through, son," laughed the man. "Come in—the water's fine."

The boy looked longingly at the pool, so clear and cool under the stinging sun; then he rose, with a sulky hitch of his shoulders. "No, sirree—I ain't going in *that* pool."

The man dived again, clinging to a rock at the bottom and gazing about him with open eyes. It was another world down there under the water, a world of distorted outlines, of glancing, fragmentary lights. The pool was full of them, intolerably bright, save there under the rock, where the deep shadow and some waving weeds, brown and crimson, made a cave of amber darkness.

It was curious how things were reflected, with a magic-lantern effect, upon the planes of the differently speeding layers of water. It was well, he thought, that it was day, and not night, with its popped drink of darkness, that bred such strange fancies.

Just for an instant he had caught the reflection of his own face thrown against the dark background of weeds and shadow. At least that was what it must have been, yet it had almost seemed as if some one were hidden behind that curtain of waving fronds, smiling out at him.

The man woke suddenly, with a feeling that a quiet but resistless voice had spoken in his ear.

The first shade of gray was stealing across the sky, paling the yellow moonlight. The dawn wind was breathing down the cañon like the note of a silent call, bidding the creatures of the night to fly, lest the advancing day capture them and imprison them in its cells of matter-of-fact.

He could hear the deer crashing through the chaparral, seeking the shade and refuge of the high cañons; the stream talked excitedly, as if making the most of the little time that remained. Soon it would cease altogether, flowing absolutely silent under the gathering light, until all at once it would break into the different note it used by day.

He rose from his blankets and stepped out on to the sands, letting the wind blow cool upon his flesh. Never before had he felt so strongly the call of the dawn wind; it was as if he could yield himself to it, be gathered and swept along by the robe of departing night, into that secret place where the darkness dwells until its time comes again. He stepped out onto the trail and looked up the cañon. He remembered that the girl was to go down to-day, down from these disturbing altitudes to the safe commonplaces of the valley. He was wondering if she would seize this, her last little moment.

It was with no surprise that he saw her coming, advancing down the trail, winding in and out among the rocks and yuccas as lightly as if she were being blown along by the wind. She saw him and smiled from afar, and he stood and waited for her, all unconscious—for she was so unconscious, too—that he was clad only in his sleeping suit, newly arisen from his bed.

She passed him by, smiling mysteriously, vivid, glowing, full of a strangely renewed life; her cheeks were aflame, her eyes brilliant, yet with a certain hint of shyness and trepidation in them.

She did not speak, but her eyes were fixed on his, and she laid a finger on her lips, as if enjoining him to secrecy—and her lips were scarlet and laughing, and the secret seemed such a delicious one. She looked, he thought, like a girl flying to meet her lover, a lover to whom she had had to win her own way, for whose sake she had just burst her last bondage.

He watched her down the cañon until she disappeared into the gathered shadows and was swallowed up by the lingering night. She moved like a bit of thistledown, as silently as a creature of air, wafted along by the gently imperious will of the wind.

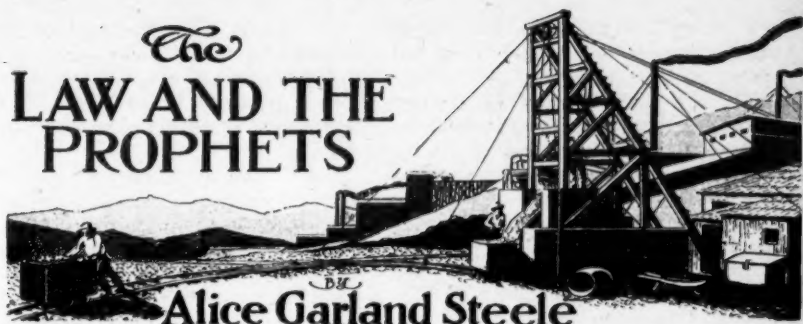
She must have reached the pool by this time, he thought; he wondered what she would see in it. Her own reflection, of course; that was the worst of a pool—it could show you only yourself.

The river hushed its laughing secrets, there was a moment of silence, then a sudden babble of the waters like a little laugh of triumph—like the laugh that lovers give when at last they meet. Then silence again, the silence of the dawn when the night has fled and the day not yet come.

The sky burned opal above him, the wind blew suddenly warm with the first rays of the sun on the high peaks. But the man shivered with an icy chill, groping his way back to his bed, huddling the blankets about him.

His gaze had fallen on the sands at his feet, and he had realized that the girl had left no tracks as she passed.

The LAW AND THE PROPHETS



Alice Garland Steele

THE labor question?" said Michaels. "Well, it is a question, boys, and it's got only one answer! Yes, sir, I saw that worked out to my satisfaction back there in Gunnison County over a year ago."

We had gathered, four of us, one foggy evening in the caboose of a coal freighter which had sidetracked to wait for a thousand more tons for the East. We had been talking about the coal strike down in Alabama, and most of us had our ideas as to the best way to settle it and start things running again for the trade. We had all of us been mixed up with mines, more or less, since we had taken out our working papers, and Michaels' was an old hand at the game, and a good one.

"Well," said I, "it's up to you to prove it, Michaels. We aren't any of us so dead set we won't give you the chance. Go on in, man, and have your say."

I knew he had some sort of story to tell, and with our pipes lit and a matter of forty minutes or so on our hands, it was a good time for the telling.

But Michaels has his own way of doing a thing, and that's beating about the bush till he gets warmed up to his work; so he threw us a few of his own private and particular opinions before he started in.

"This country has taken a good many tries at bridging over," said Michaels, "the heap-big hole between capital and labor, but so far they ain't any of 'em proved strong enough to hold both parties at the same time. There's socialism—that's a suspension bridge—everybody's afraid to trust it, and I don't know as I blame 'em; so it just hangs there, in suspense, so to speak, and a menace to the nation. And then there's philanthropy—that's all right in its way, but this side of the millennium it won't get to be more than a sort of footpath that only one man at a time is willing to take. Then there's anarchy—they believe in tunneling through right underground, but you can be certain, what with red flags and dynamite, that system is never going to be popular. They're too busy blowing up the country ever to get through with the job! Then there's arbitration. Says Mr. Carnegie, 'We'll begin on our side, and the workingman can begin on the other. We're bound to meet in the middle!' But any fool knows that unless they're willing to stand by the same set of cables, it's ten chances to one that bridge will never be finished at all.

"But there's *one* bridge," said Michaels, "that they're digging foundations for right now—and that's the bridge of the future, and that's the bridge that we built down in Gunnison County a

year ago, and it's still in good working order."

"Go on, Michaels," said Dugan. "Faith, man, I'm wasting a full pipe on you, and what with your talk and the smoke, my mind's going hazy. Go on, man, and tell us your story!" Dugan, being Irish, is a bit hasty.

Michaels just eyed him easylike, and took as much as five minutes to make himself comfortable in the back of the caboose, smoking his pipe in the corner of his mouth, and winking at us till he got good and ready.

"It was a year ago," said Michaels, "a bit outside of Gunnison, and Gunnison County has the best string of coal mines in Colorado. I was working as head of the machinery shebang for old Boyd, who was owner of the Peacock, and president of the biggest company in the West.

"I'd been working for him, off and on, for fifteen years. He took me there from Pennsylvania, and I'd got to know him and his ways as well as I knew his mines. He was one of those logger-headed, self-made Americans, and as proud of it as he was of having his own way—and he had that with all of us, I can tell you! As long as we walked chalk for him, he'd give us our good tickets and let us keep on toeing the mark, but when a man went off the handle, or tried back talk, or let his work slide, old Boyd had him fired so quick he couldn't see where he was going. It didn't make any difference how long you'd been underground attending to his business, if he found that some other fellow could do the work better than you, you got your pay envelope in the middle of the month, and about as short a 'good day' as he could say in the English language.

"Well, as I said, I was head engineer, and not afraid to have my habits overhauled at any hour of the day or night. But one day McLaws came up to me and said, 'Michaels,' says he, 'the old

man has something to say to you. Go up to the office after the night shift goes on.' McLaws was mine boss, and had side-stepped to old Boyd's time-table so long he was warranted to run on schedule.

"It felt to me right away like trouble waiting for me of some kind. McLaws had a lean, bleak look that made you feel unhappy just to be in the same room with him. We none of us held it up against him—we simply kept out of his way; and let me tell you that whatever job you're onto underground is quite enough to attend to without cultivating the acquaintance of anybody who's going to make you feel more uncomfortable than you are already.

"Well, when the night shift went on, I went up in the hoist and walked across the yards to the little wooden office where old Boyd spent his time when he came out to the Peacock; for, as I said, he had a whole string of mines on the go, and was working on shifts just as sure as any of us.

"Strange to say, the bad news didn't strike me as bad just at first. He looked up quite pleasant and spoke real affable for him.

"'Michaels,' says he, 'there ain't anything much you don't know about machinery, is there?' And I said, wondering if he was going to increase my wages:

"'Well, sir, I've been at it long enough to be taken for a part of a machine myself, and that's all I can say.'

"'And that's enough,' says he, and then, quick as a flash, 'Could you tell in a month how much another man knew about your job?'

"That held me up a minute, but I was bound to speak the truth. 'Yes, sir,' I said, 'Mr. Boyd. I could tell in a week, sir.'

"'H'm!' he says, and puts his thumbs into his vest pockets in a way he had. He wore half a yard of watch chain that gave him a real substantial look

below the chest. 'Michaels,' says he, 'my son, young Boyd, is just out of Yale—that's a big college back in New Haven, Connecticut.'

"That so, sir?" said I. 'I'm glad to hear it, Mr. Boyd.'

"Yes, Michaels,' says he. 'And he's taken honors, and a diploma from the Sheffield Scientific. He's qualified,' says old Boyd—at least so he *tells* me, Michaels—as all kinds of a fancy engineer.'

"I pricked up my ears at that, and I began to see which way the lode line was tending.

"I don't believe much,' went on old Boyd, 'in modern young men. Most of 'em, as fast as they get out of college, want a year in Europe, and then another year bumming around generally, and by that time they ain't fit to be human beings. Well, Michaels—and there was a lot of pride in his voice—'my son *ain't* that kind. He's coming out here to Gunnison at the end of this week, and I'm going to put him to work right down in the old Peacock!'

"Yes, sir,' says I, 'Mr. Boyd.' I knew it was all up with me then and there.

"You've been a good engineer, Michaels,' says old Boyd, 'and I don't believe in beating about the bush. If he's *fit* for it, I'm going to put my son in your place, and we'll shift you to — Well, I haven't just made up my mind where, but we'll pay you the same wages.'

"Well, I just sat there in that little wooden office and thought of my wife and my two kids and the neat little house we had so handy to the yards, and I tell you I felt pretty bitter that he happened to have a son at all. And while I was thinking, he got up.

"All right, Michaels,' says he. 'That's all. I guess you understand me, and you'll do your part with my boy.' There was the note of pride again. 'Test him,' says old Boyd, 'and if he's

no darned good, tell me so. But be honest about it, for he's all the son I have.'

"I don't mind telling you, boys, that I went that night to the missis pretty glum, and hating that young college whippersnapper so darned much I couldn't see straight. I knew just what he'd be, insisting on creases in his pants two thousand feet under the ground, and sniffing about sanitary drinking cups every time he had to get water out of a tin pail. As for machinery, I didn't expect him to know a dynamo from an oxygen tank.

"I thought about him a good deal all that week, and McLaws, who was the only man on to it, eyed me with his bleak smile and was about as tantalizing in his sympathy as a black beetle.

"Well, on Monday morning bright and early, young Boyd showed up in tow of McLaws, who dumped him, without any apology, right on my hands.

"The old man wants him to see everything,' said McLaws, under his breath, 'and I've got a bunch of new men, Polaks, working down in the east heading. So it's up to you to do the honors to the son and heir, see?'

"I saw a good deal of red, I'll tell you, and as we went along into the various sidings, I was just looking for a chance to prove that the best place for old Boyd's son was a high-priced summer hotel, and *not* his father's coal mine. So when he slipped an old, villainous-looking pipe out of his pocket and started to light up, I just lit into him.

"You can't do that down here,' I says, shortlike; and for a moment he stared at me sharp, and then he broke into a smile.

"Holy cats,' says he, 'but I'm an innocent! Well, I'll learn, Michaels, don't you worry. I'm down here to work for my living, and I mean to show my dad I'm right onto the job.'

"He had the creases in his pants, all right, and regular football shoulders, and a mop of light hair that most

women would have went crazy over, it would have saved so much crimping. But he had other things, had young Boyd—he looked, when he spoke to you, straight into your eyes, and his smile was so sunny, even in that dark place, that it warmed you to the core.

"'I'll tell you about that old pipe,' said he, looking at it as if he loved it. 'It's helped me all through my college exams, and cheered me more than the person that gave it to me will ever find out.' The way he said it, I knew on the spot the person must have been his best girl. 'It's not a ladylike pipe, is it, Michaels? It shows good taste and insight into character, and the person that selected it said it looked like me. I'm fond of it, somehow—'way off here in Colorado it's a sort of a chum—but I'll stow it away and not forget my manners next time. Now let's see your scale house.'

"He got down to business right there, and the way he hauled me into every nook and corner of the old Peacock seemed like he was counting every spread feather in her tail!

"'H'm,' he says, 'not so awfully up to date, is she? I noticed that when I came down in the hoisting car. How long have the men been going up and down in that old cigar box?'

"'A matter of fifteen years,' says I, 'and perhaps longer—but we added a safety catch and had the cables strengthened last year.'

"'Yes,' says he, 'I saw that, but it's not oversatisfactory, putting new wine in old bottles. I'll see my dad about that.'

"It was the same way with the machinery and the ventilators.

"'You ought to have an air shaft,' he said, 'built right into this entry. Oh, not only for ventilation,' he added. 'I suppose you men are used to the bad air and rather like it—but in case of explosion and gas collecting in this part of the mine.' And then, as if he was

afraid of hurting my feelings, he says to me: 'Don't you think so, Michaels?'

"I told him the truth. 'Yes, sir,' I said. 'I've thought so for two years.'

"'And what set you thinking,' says he, 'in the first place?'

"And I mentioned that we'd lost seven men on the spot from carbon monoxide two years before. He frowned at that, but then, quick as a flash, he smiled.

"'I'll speak to my father,' he said. 'We'll put up an air shaft as a sort of monument to those poor chaps, hey, Michaels?'

"Well, I didn't enthuse any, for it struck me that I knew his father a trifle better than he did, but I had no intention of coming between old Boyd and his son. He had a few more alterations in his mind's eye, and spoke of 'em pretty freely; and, strange to say, they were things we'd talked over, me and McLaws, with the old man more than once, but he wouldn't stand for the expense. 'The mine's safe enough,' old Boyd had said, and that had settled it.

"'You ought to have a larger electric plant,' young Boyd says, 'so you could reach out here into these headings. You ought to run all your cars on a trolley wire, and you ought to have electric lighting all through the mine. I saw a lot of that done down in Pennsylvania last summer, and I tell you, it's great. You could use your safety lamps just the same—because, after all, there's nothing like real flame to discover black damp, is there, Michaels? Old Sir Humphrey Davy knew what he was about, all those years ago!'

"Well, it was the same on top. He said, young Boyd, that there was too much rubbish about to look pretty, and that there were more saloons than any mining camp could use. I told him they were used all right, and he smiled across at me.

"'Sure,' said he. 'But if I were my

father, I'd get rid of three or four and build a moving-picture place instead, where the miners could take their sweet-hearts evenings, and a dance hall,' said he quietly, 'that would be used for decent dancing and nothing else.'

"I saw he was onto the whole thing, and I saw that if young Boyd were let loose in that town, there'd be tall spending of old Boyd's dollars—and it would be spent all to the good. But I knew right there he hadn't any chance, and it made me sick. You see, the unexpected had happened—I'd grown fond, all at once, of old Boyd's son.

"Well, we worked together, him and me, with him as a sort of assistant engineer, for two months or more, and I got to look at him as the best thing that had ever happened to the old Peacock. He had a way with those Finns and Polaks that made them shiver with delight, especially when he tried stunts with their language. There was one old fellow named Sztiska, who was a perfect black devil for temper, and as poor a miner as ever worked underground. He was on the day shift as a loader, and twice McLaws had him fired, and then, before we knew it, he was back again, working his heart out to gain a kind word from old Boyd's son. That young fellow had gone to his dad and gotten Sztiska another chance.

"Well, as I said, he was the heart and life of the old Peacock. When our shift was over and we were up in the washroom getting used to the good air, young Boyd would light up the villainous pipe his best girl gave him and tell us stories about his college till we got wild. He even had some of us learn his college yell, for, says he, 'I get awful homesick, sometimes, and it'd do me good, boys, to hear you let her rip for good old Yale.'

"And we did—Polaks, Finns, Irish—the whole shebang of us would take a try in good old English at his college yell. And old man Boyd, hearing the

noise inside his wooden office, would leave his revolving chair and poke his head out of the window, with his ears cocked not to miss a word. They were great chums, that father and son, in their own way—yet it didn't make the old man hand out any of his dollars.

"All this time I was wondering how soon I'd get shifted out of sight of it all, and that thought used to worry me sick. I'd gotten so fond of young Boyd, as well as of the mine, that I didn't want to leave either of them, and then young Boyd up and settled that in his own way, too. One day he turned to me quick-like and says, says he:

"'Michaels, my father told me this morning that I was to have your place.'

"'Yes, sir, Mr. Boyd,' says I.

"'Well,' says young Boyd, 'I told him what I thought of his idea—that it was pretty rotten. And I told him a lie, Michaels, too. I told him I didn't understand the job well enough to go it alone. What do you think my father said, Michaels? He said, "That's all right, my son; but Michaels has been ahead of you, and I'll take his version instead of yours."'

"I nodded. I had told the old man the truth—that his son was as good an engineer as ever was needed underground, and that he knew more about up-to-date machinery than I did. The old man's pride paid me for cutting away the ground, so to speak, under my feet.

"'Well,' said young Boyd, 'I think that was pretty rotten of you, Michaels, to go behind my back and say things to my father that could only do yourself a lot of harm.'

"I choked a bit over my engine, but I didn't answer.

"'Now, look here, Michaels,' says young Boyd. 'Yoy and I have been pals for a month or more, and if you think I'm going to do a nasty turn to you and your jolly wife and your two little children, just because I happen to be

the owner's son, you've not shown as much judgment as—as the person who selected my pipe!"

"I choked some more, and went on oiling her up."

"'Michaels,' says young Boyd, 'I've grown fond of you, I have.'

"That was too much for me. I thrust out my fist and got hold of his, over the oil rags and cinders, and says I: 'Mr. Boyd, sir, you do me proud, and I'm glad to give you the place. You're a bigger and a better man than me!'

"'Wait a bit,' says young Boyd. 'I'm not fancying engineering just now. I'm shifted, Michaels—I begin as a loader with Sztiska's gang to-morrow.'

"'As a loader?'" says I, the eyes popping out of my head, but he only threw back his head and laughed.

"'What do you take me for, Michaels? I'm not darned fool enough to stay at *loading* all my life. I'm simply going straight through the mine, learning to do all the other fellows do, so that—so that when I come to take my father's place, I'll know you miners' side of the story. That's all.'

"'And your father agrees to it.'

"'My father agrees to it.'

"'Then,' says I, wringing his hand, 'the Lord bless you, boy, and that's all I can say.'

"'And that's enough,' says he, smiling. And then we got back to work again with something between us two that years or troubles weren't ever going to wipe out.

"'Well, you wouldn't think on top of this that things were going to go wrong with the mine, but three months or so afterward—in October, it was—there were one or two nasty things happened in one of the north headings—a bit of an explosion that didn't do any real damage, and a roof that toppled in, scaring two or three drill workers that were getting ready for a blast. It was just enough to set the men thinking that the mine wasn't so safe as she might be,

so a lot of Hungarians and Polaks struck for more pay, and that setting the other men a bad example, most of the rest of 'em followed, and we had to close down on the last day of October, with our winter contracts all held up, and no prospect of filling them at all.

"The old man was furious. He and McLaws stayed over to the office day and night, talking and arguing it out with the leaders on the other side, and young Boyd hung around and just looked weary.

"'No, no, *no*!' thundered old Boyd. 'I'll not make one concession! I'll not make the hours one minute shorter, or promise one penny more pay! As for your safety devices—*pah!* What do you men know of safety, anyway? You do yourselves more harm on top in these saloons than can ever happen to you in my mines. I tell you we haven't had an accident in ten years, and these two-penny explosions don't mean anything. So just get out, the whole darned lot of you!'

"'What about the seven men, father, who got caught down in number three west of carbon monoxide?'

"It was young Boyd, just putting in a word quietly, while he fingered a paper weight on the old man's desk.

"'Huh?'" says the old man, and stared across at him.

"'Yes,' says young Boyd, 'they died, all of them, for want of a little forethought and a few dollars spent on an air shaft. I told you that before.'

"'Well, we all kept pretty quiet, while old Boyd sat still in his revolving chair, glaring over at his son.

"'You told me that before, did you?' snarled old Boyd. 'And what did I tell you? To mind your own damned business. Well, I repeat it now!'

"'That's all right, sir,' said young Boyd, still quietly, 'and I've minded it as well as I could. But I'd like you to know that in this strike I am—on the side of the men!'

"It was so still in that room you could have heard a pin drop. My own heart was beating, but that was the only sound I heard.

"And what right," asked old Boyd, after a minute, 'have you to be "on the side of the men," as you call it?' The veins were standing out on his forehead like whipcords, and a little, choking whistle came with his breath.

"Young Boyd, against the opposite wall, threw back his head and shook the curls out of his eyes. He had got pretty white, and the smile had died out of his face.

"The right of humanity, father."

"Old Boyd snapped his fingers. *'That for your humanity!'* he cried. 'And be damned to it!'

"You don't understand," said young Boyd, warming up. 'You don't see it as we do, because you are capital arrayed against labor. But I love you enough to tell you the truth about yourself right now! Your mine is unsafe, your men are unsafe, and they're good men, all of them, who work like soldiers and stick to their posts in the face of damp and death and discouragement! Your machinery is outworn, your methods are obsolete, and some day you'll wear your heart out, too, in being sorry that you didn't stop while it was time. You haven't a proper hoisting gear, you haven't oxygen helmets, you haven't even the commonest sort of protection for the men who dig out your dollars. No, sir, you haven't! I've worked in your mine, and I *know!* I've been a loader and a trimmer and an engineer, I've drilled holes and shot blasts and been in danger of my life, and sometimes I've been a coward, and wanted to run away, but I've stuck at it, like your men. And now I've one word to say, and I'm done.' He stopped a minute, but only a minute, to look around at us, and then back at old Boyd, tipping in his chair, and then he went straight on.

"I don't say," said young Boyd, 'you're not inside the law, all right, about your machinery and your hours and your pay. But that's where all the trouble hinges—it's all been a question of keeping the law—and the profits. But I tell you, dad, there's a bigger law than any this nation has set going, and we're bound to keep that, too. Some people call it God's law, but I'd rather call it just the law of human kindness —' His voice broke a bit, and I could have cried for him, knowing what he was doing for himself, but he kept straight on.

"And there are prophets, too, sir—prophets that are voices, telling us to do the straight thing and the big thing at any cost. We may not hear them, but in the end—in the *end*," said young Boyd, 'we'll all of us find they are the only "profits" worth while! And now I'm through with it, and I suppose I'm discharged from your mine, and I've grown to love it like you do, but I couldn't stay around any longer, anyhow. Not because you aren't doing the square thing by your men, but—the square thing—by yourself!'

"We didn't cheer him. We saw him there, braced against the bare wooden wall, and talking his heart out for a lot of us grizzly miners—him that had come out of college with 'honors,' and could have lorded it over us all. We didn't cheer him—we each of us had a lump in our throat. And presently, without a word, young Boyd slips away, with a last look at his father, sitting back in his chair with his eyes on space, and looking sure an old man now. And then, before we knew it, old Boyd was waving us away.

"Well, we got out somehow, and we went home, sick of the whole business, and all that night I'll warrant we thought about things pretty hard. Anyway, the next day those strikers got together and just gave in.

"It's the only way we have, sir,'

said one of the leaders. 'It's the only way we can think of to honor your son, Mr. Boyd, and so if you don't object, it being fairly unc customary, we'll just go ahead and open up the mine again, leaving the issues up to you to decide.'

"It was as if they all felt, somehow, that young Boyd's talk wouldn't go to waste. Every one of them rough men believed in that young fellow straight through.

"Well, we got to hauling coal again, same as ever, and I stuck over my oil rags in the engine room, and we got used to the dark again after our days of fresh air—but we none of us got used to missing young Boyd. He'd gone down to Gunnison and taken a place in the Gunnison Bank, and we tried to feel it would come out all right, specially as he used to say to us, those rare times when he'd come up to see me and McLaws, that he'd be back in the mine again before long, because he knew the old man would send for him and make it up.

"'You see, boys,' he says, 'it's like this. We've always been chums, my dad and I, and—and I think he'll get onto it I was only trying to say what I felt was true—and he'll send for me again. Nothing and nobody could stick very long between us. Oh, I'll be back in the mine, all right, but don't you worry, Michaels. I'll not take *your* job, that's certain!'

"Well—he came back to us, but in a sadder way than any of us had ever looked for.

"It was a cold, late day, round about the first of December that the accident happened down in entry B that lost us eleven men and crippled the Peacock for six months. I was cleaning up, just after my shift, in the washroom, trying to get the oil and coal dust out of my eyes, when McLaws came running over on the double-quick, followed by six or eight men dragging a line of hose.

"'There's a fire in B entry,' he says.

'There must have been an explosion, and smoke is coming out of the shaft—and something has happened to the hoisting car. There's a load of men down there signaling to come up, but Riley can't move her. She's stuck!'

"'Try the stairway,' I called. 'Maybe from there you can get down into B.'

"But he shook his head.

"'Stairway's gone under,' he said. 'We tried that first—and, man, you can't live in the smoke!'

"Well, I knew then that it was pretty serious, and so sudden it had come like a flash from the sky. And just as he was tossing me the words, a figure stood in the doorway, clean against the sunset. It was young Boyd.

"He seemed to take in the situation without a word, and as he looked across at me I knew why.

"'I've been expecting it,' he said, and that was all. We'd often talked over that wooden stairway and the trap it might become, but at that time it was inside the law, all right.

"Well, we sent a load of water down into that air shaft big enough to drown in, and after an hour the smoke stopped coming, and we guessed the fire was out at the bottom. I say we guessed, for you never can be sure of the tricks fire will play in a coal mine. But, of course, there was worse danger to come. The worst of a mine accident isn't the fire at all—it's the gas that gets liberated by the burning coal; and that was the trouble we faced that night after the sun went down.

"Young Boyd had been here and there and everywhere, doing any odd thing that would count, and meanwhile the hoisting car couldn't be got to the top. Riley, the hoisting engineer, said he dragged her up twenty feet or so, but the way she slid away from him showed she'd ripped into one of her cables. He gave it up then, and went and sat down in the power house with

his head in his hands. He'd joked with the men going down!

"Young Boyd hadn't heard about the hoisting car, but now his face got white like the rest of us.

"My God," he said, 'I thought the men were up!'

"We told him it was only the shift that worked on night duty, and not all of that—only two watchmen, Neil and Paterson, and a gang of Polaks, including Sztiska, who were overhauling a roof that had fallen in the day before.

"Young Boyd, leaning over the air shaft, turned back to us.

"I can't hear anything," he said. 'Try if you can, Michaels.'

"But I knew it wasn't any use to try—I was used to what gas does to a man down in the bowels of the earth, and there ain't any silence harder to break than the silence of a bunch of men that are in the thick of it. While I was thinking about it, young Boyd started up.

"Get those two helmets, Michaels, we were fussing with before I left the mine. They're in the storage room, back of the lamp supplies. And where's my father? I'd like to see my father.'

"McLaws answered him: 'He's down in Gunnison. I've wired him to come up.'

"Young Boyd threw the hair out of his eyes. 'Well, no matter. The helmets, Michaels, and you fellows rig a rope to the air shaft and throw a plank across. Michaels and I are going down.'

"He caught me into it just like that, and I wasn't cur enough to back out of a hole that boy was brave enough to lead me into. But the helmets—I hadn't faith in them the size of a pea. They were samples that had been sent out several years back by a company that has since made thousands in the business. They only supplied a man for one hour, instead of the regulation two, and I couldn't guarantee them to

work right because they'd never been tested. They'd lain in a heap in a closet till young Boyd got to fussing over them two months before.

"Well, I got them out, and we pumped them full of oxygen—we kept a tank of that handy—and, with a prayer for the kids and my missis, I followed young Boyd into the wash-room and they buckled them on. They weighed forty pounds apiece, and when they shut down the mouthpiece, you felt that breath was the grandest thing in life, and that you were saying good-bye to it forever.

"Young Boyd took his risk like a man.

"Listen," he said, as they were strapping him in. 'Listen, McLaws: I'm going to have a try at hauling up some of those Polaks, but—I may not get back myself, and, if I don't, tell my old dad, will you, that—the only monument I want him to raise to my memory is—is *safety for every man underground!*'

"McLaws nodded, and his bleak face was as tender as a woman's as he led that young fellow out to the shaft. A crowd had gathered by this time, all the men on the day shift and a lot of women—some of 'em wives to the men in the mine. Well, we hadn't any time to waste, so we made a brave show of it, and down we went, first him and then me, into that long, black hole. They'd fixed up a sort of box for us, and we crouched in it, our knees touching, as they lowered us length on length. We could feel it striking with a soft bump every now and then against the concrete sides.

"It was a hard descent, I tell you, but at the bottom we found purgatory. The fire, as far as we could see, was out, but the smoke was worse than any blackness you ever saw, and the little electric lamps we carried, each with its own battery, had no more effect on it than a lighted match would

have on a midnight sky. The heat was so awful that the sweat stood out in beads, and that and the weight of our helmets left mighty little room for courage. I don't mind telling you right now that it was young Boyd, every time, that led the way.

"Well, we worked our way down the entry, up to our knees in black water, till we found the men we were looking for, huddled all in a heap, and stretched across the opening that led from the hoisting room. There were only two alive, one of the watchmen, Neil, and the Polak Sztiska. Young Boyd wanted to stop and haul 'em all to the top, but I bawled to him that it wasn't any use. I had seen too many dead men to miss a live one now, and I knew if we waited much longer, we'd be joining their company. Finally I got him to believing it, and he turned with me while we dragged first Neil and then the Polak to the bottom of the shaft, and tumbled them, somehow, into the little wooden box. We had agreed on signals, and I gave them the word to haul up.

"I had a moment of pretty black horror when I saw that rigged-up apparatus rising in long jerks, leaving us there in the bottom of that deadly mine, and then suddenly I saw there was something wrong with young Boyd. He'd twisted his helmet, we found out afterward, and let in some of the gasses, but all I knew was that all in a minute he was struggling like a choking man for air.

"I hauled him over as close as I could to the shaft, and struck hard with the hammer we'd carried as a signal, but whether in the excitement they let it slip by I can't tell. I only knew we were both of us, especially young Boyd, in for it, and for the next few minutes I looked straight into the face of death.

"If I could have chucked my own helmet right there and given him the oxygen and a chance to live, I'd 'a' done

it, for in dark hours like those a man can love like a woman and not be ashamed of it, and I tell you I loved young Boyd! I know I was trying to pray as he fell against me, and all the time I was holding his limp body tight against the air shaft, until, after what seemed eternity, the little wooden box slid down.

"They told me, when at last I got to the top with him, I was crying inside my helmet like a child. All I know is that some power stronger than myself gave me strength to lift him into that makeshift arrangement, and strike with my hammer till my own senses went under. And it took me," said Michaels, "two solid hours to realize that I wasn't dead, after all, but there on top of that mine shaft, breathing God's blessed air!"

One of us spoke.

"Did he live?" asked Dugan, and Michaels, blinking his eyes in the smoke of the caboose, drew a deep breath and went on:

"Who—young Boyd? Well, he came up with about two heartbeats left in him, but I think it was the cheer the men gave him that brought him back from the gates. They were still cheering him when I came to, and as I heard them, and looked at his dead-white face and the shut eyes and the shock of yellow hair, I raised up on my elbow with a bigger lump in my throat than I've ever had before or since.

"'Give him,' says I, choking back the tears, 'give him his college yell, boys. That'll bring him round quicker than anything under God's heaven!' And they let her rip, then and there, for good old Yale!

"It did the trick." Michaels stopped a moment. "It did the trick, boys. It brought the look of sanity into his eyes, and a ghost of a smile into his face as he turned it around to all of us there in the dark. They were still shouting it when old Boyd's motor tore into the

yards, and when old Boyd hopped out and knelt there on the hard ground by the side of his son, they let her rip again. And I tell you, in that hour every man of us came close to every other man of us, and Polaks and Irish and Jews and Christians, we knew that the love of God is most of all love for your fellow man.

"Oh, yes, they put in the safety devices, all right. The mine was out of commission for six months, but now she's turning out coal with the best of them, and there isn't a better-equipped mine in the whole of Colorado than the old Peacock, nor a prouder set of miners than work in her headings. But it's funny," added Michaels. "What do you think were the first words young Boyd said to me some time after midnight that day? He was lying in the best hotel in Gunnison, with the doctor gone, and the old man sitting on a stool near by, and I looking down at him, waiting to carry the good news to the mine.

" 'Michaels,' says he, in as much of a voice as the gas had left to him, 'Michaels—just—hunt in that vest pocket of mine and fetch me—what you'll find there.' "

"It was a picture of the prettiest girl you ever saw. He took it and looked at for a minute, and then he smiled in that way he had.

" 'It's the person, Michaels,' he says, 'who selected—my pipe! ' "

We sat there, in the caboose, pretty silent for a minute or two, thinking over Michaels' story, and then Dugan, it was, flung him another question.

"And what," says Dugan, "might be that bridge you were speaking of a while ago?"

Michaels stared out of the little window at the red lights of an oncoming train.

"Why, lads," says he, "I don't know as it's so much of a bridge, after all—I think I'd rather call it a way—the way of the human heart."





THE Hotel of the Three Americas proved to lie in that mysterious region east of Union Square. A bell boy, tinted a delicate lemon, bore my card to the Guatemalan diplomat whose views on revolutions and rubber my editor yearned to print in next Sunday's magazine section, and returned with the tidings that the señor was without, but would return *muy pronto*. Wherefore, I sought a table in the café, experimented with a weird concoction highly recommended by a Castilian waiter, and gave ear to the medley of Spanish and Portuguese which agitated an atmosphere already sufficiently burdened by the strains of "La Paloma" and the pervasive subtlety of abundant garlic. Johnny Foster appeared from nowhere in particular, and took the chair opposite my own. I have learned to expect Johnny in unlikely places, but to find him here really vexed me—the troubled atmosphere of the Hotel of the Three Americas is wholly unsuited to Johnny's imperturbable disposition.

"What on earth are you doing here?" I demanded, with some heat.

"Stopping here," said Johnny calmly, beginning to roll a cigarette.

"Well," I snapped, inspecting the room for Johnny's benefit, "there's no accounting for tastes!"

"That's right!" said Johnny agreeably. "That sure is one true little prov-

erb. I used to know a Kanaka cook on a seal poacher that wore pink suspenders. And there was a woman out in St. Jo that kept her first husband's store teeth on the mantelpiece, under one of those glass domes. And, come to think of it, there was a girl in Yucatan—Say, I'm going to tell you about that girl. Busy?"

"Go ahead!" I growled, concealing my eagerness, for Johnny's stories are hard to get if he conceives the idea that his listener is anxious. So, having finished the fabrication of his cigarette, he applied a wax match and settled down to his yarn.

"I've been down Yucatan, this last winter," said Johnny, "buying a bit of land for 'Hookfinger' Casey, up Boston way. Hookfinger was starting a rubber company, and his feet got a bit cold from reading in the papers how the post-office folks were interfering with honest promoters. So he handed me a fairish roll and told me to bring him back a real documentary deed to some ground—he wasn't particular which kind, so long as it was reasonably hot. I asked a man I know, and he told me Yucatan. So I went there.

"Well, sir, when I got to Mérida, I found land was just about as cheap as eggs in winter. They raise hemp down there for the Binder Trust, and the way they cash in on it is something scandalous. I hung around the hotel for a

while, hoping something might turn up, and, sure enough, something did. A fellow named 'Squint' Leary blew in and got acquainted with me, casual, in the Café of the Seven Million Little Angels.

"This Squint person come by his name honest, all right. He was about as handsome as a stump fence. I'm no hand at describing, but if I was, I reckon this Leary's map would tax my vocabulary right heavy. He possessed more different kinds of facial and physical unbeautifulnesses than I ever believed could be crammed onto any one person. Let it go at that, for the present. I'll come back to him later, when I'm warmed up proper.

"'Rubber land?' says this Leary, when he discovered what I was after. 'I know the exact thing you want. Old Ramón Ortega, up country a ways, owns pretty nigh half the Gulf of Mexico—had it since some ancestor of his drew it by grant from the Spanish crown. He'll part with it cheap, too. Come on!'

"'Wait!' says I. 'You misunderstood me, I reckon. It's rubber I'm aiming to cultivate—not sharks. Rubber won't grow out there in the Gulf, will it?'

"'Sure it will!' says Squint. 'Just as well as any other place! You don't want to waste good money buying dry land. What you want is a nice, cheap deed, all decorated up with pink seals and purple ribbons, to flash on the post-office flat feet.'

"So I went along with him. We chartered a couple of saddle mules from the hotel keeper, and this Squint person piloted the party back into the brush for maybe a hundred miles—I don't know just how far it was. I was too busy hunting a soft spot in the saddle to pay much attention to the landscape. Anyway, after a while we come to a big square stone house, built inside out, like all the old houses down there, with

the front yard right where the front hall ought to be, and all the windows on the inside. It stood in the middle of about a million acres of hemp, with Indians working in the fields when the bosses was looking and sleeping peaceful in the shade when they wasn't. A boy takes our mules, and we slide into the front yard—patio, they call it.

"There was two of the fattest guys I ever saw in my life holding down wicker chairs in the shade of the wall, both fast asleep and each of them holding one of them little brown cigarroots that are soaked with saltpeter, so's to be self-smoking. They burn up industrious and beautiful, for which there's a reason. While we stood there waiting for one of the sleepers to come to, the cigarette burned down to the fingers of the fattest one and woke him. That's why they have 'em fixed like that—when the fire gets down to the skin, they know it's time to wake up and light another, see?

"Well, this stout party saw us, and made orations in Spanish, to which Squint replies fluent and plentiful. After maybe twenty minutes, Squint tells me that the señor is prostrated with pleasure to have us honor his hut with our presence, and that means he'll talk business when the moon is right for it. In the meantime, the eats, drinks, and smokes is on him. Also, he wakes up the other sleeping beauty, and Squint tells me this is the priest—a comfortable-looking old bird, with a face like a walnut, but a good heart. I could see that in his eye.

"We settled down there right then, with a house boy to fetch us drinks and cigarettes, and two chairs fixed for us in the cool of the court. And it struck me right then that if Barnum could have lamped them three heavy-weight curiosities, he'd have shed blood before he'd have let 'em escape. In all my days I never saw three such disbeautiful humans, and when they was lined

up, nodding in their seats, the effect was just gorgeous.

"It wasn't what you'd call exciting for me, not being able to understand their lingo and not feeling overly sleepy—until in comes the girl I was telling you about. Luceela, her name was, and the old don allows, sleepy, that she's his daughter. She was different from the kind of Spanish girls you read about—a big, wholesome lump of a girl, with red hair and a laugh 'way down in her throat, and the bluest eyes I ever saw. Those eyes got my goat right off; they reminded me of something—maybe the way the wax figgers on Thirty-fourth Street look out through the store windows. They gave me the fidgets, until I got wise to the reason. You see, this girl was stone-blind!

"No, I didn't spot it right off. She knew her way around so well that she didn't need to go slow, or feel for things. And she didn't *act* blind, neither. She was jolly, you know, always laughing and chattering away in Spanish or Maya—that's the Indian lingo—and to watch her, you'd never have guessed that she couldn't see as well as anybody.

"Well, Squint Leary came to life the minute she appeared. And I could see that he made a big hit with her from the start. He could spout Spanish like a native, and his voice was just right for it, too—low, you know, and smooth. I couldn't understand what he was shooting at her, but watching her face showed me she was just eating it up. The old don and the priest slept right on through it all, except when a cigarette would burn one of them and then he'd wake up, pull a string of melodious cuss words in a tired sort of way, light a fresh pill, and sink back into the arms of Morphine immediate.

"That was a fair sample of the dizzy whirl of life at that hacienda—the Hacienda of the Sweet Saints, they

called it. You see, them Yucatecos are all full of pretty fancies. There was a gamecock the old don owned, named 'St. John the Baptist,' and another called 'Precious Jewel.' That's the way they are. I was hoping to get our business settled up that afternoon and get a start on the back trail early next morning, but Squint explains that they don't behave precipitate, like that, in Yucatan.

"He was right. The first week it was 'Much joyous to meet you!' and by the second we got as far as 'What a devil of a heat!' and along about the third we was beginning to edge along cautious to the matter of them Gulf lands I was aiming to buy for Hookfinger Casey. We'd lay abed till maybe nine or so, and then we'd have coffee and a smoke, and doze a while in the patio, till it was time for breakfast—along about noon. Then we'd take our siestas—that's Spanish for going back to bed and sleeping it off—which would last maybe two or three hours; after which we'd sit in the patio until supper. Evenings we'd amuse ourselves by a little more of the same. It was a wild and hilarious life, as you can easy see.

"Mostly the old don slept, and the priest, Padre Ignacio, kept him company. The padre, of course, had a lot of services to attend to in the little church that belonged to the plantation, and all the Mayas and the womenfolks went. Squint began going, too, the second morning. I could see he was hit hard. He'd sit there and spin Spanish to Luceela by the hour, with his skew-gee eyes just eating her, and his phiz something awful to look at, sober and serious and ugly as a Gila monster.

"At first it didn't bother me much, but after a while it began to get on my nerves. Anybody could see that this Luceela was a real girl, no matter if she did happen to be blind, and when I'd remember the things I'd heard in

Mérida about this Squint, I felt pretty average mean to sit there and watch him fixing to draw down a prize like Luceela. So I decided that I'd draw a few hands in the game myself and see how the cards was running.

"Not knowing Spanish made it kinda hard, but as soon as Luceela got the idea that I wanted to learn the lingo, she was wild to teach it to me, and I didn't pick it up any faster than the law allows, I'm free to admit. It was great to hear her scolding me when I'd make a mistake for about the fiftieth time hand running, or laughing when I pulled a funny one, or pleased pink when I got something right, and I played it for all it was worth.

"After a while Squint put his hand on the table. He come into my room one night and put it right up to me, straight.

"I ain't putting up any squeal, Johnny,' he said. 'I may have my own private opinions as to whatever line of luck handed me the facial misfits I'm wearing, but I ain't whining any. Only I want to say, frank, that this looks like my one chance to draw a little happiness out of the game. Johnny,' he says, and I was mighty sorry for him, the way his voice broke, 'no female woman ever said a kind word to me since I got out of short pants, except one that I got acquainted with over the phone, and when she saw me she had a fit! It may sound funny to you,' he says, 'but it ain't any joke from where I stand, not by a jugful!'

"Well,' says I, 'not aiming to hurt your feelings, Squint, I can see how that might be myself. But what's the answer?'

"Just this,' he says: 'I want to marry this girl Luceela. She won't see my face, and it ain't going to make no difference to her. She likes me, Johnny, and I think she'll take me if you keep out of it. I'm asking you, straight-forward, to buy your old shark meadow

and slide back to where you come from!'

"Squint,' I says, 'I'd like to oblige a friend, and if you'd 'a' asked me a week ago, I'd probably have went. But, you see, I'm sorta thinking about taking Luceela along with me when I start, the way things are now. I'm sorry to be running against a friend, but that's how it lays. And the best I can do is to promise I'll play it fair. I'll keep still about what they told me back in Mérida, and not knock you to the lady nor her old man, neither. But I'm out to win if I can, I'm giving you fair notice!'

"All right, old scout,' says Squint. 'And I'll play it likewise. It's an even break, the way things stand, and here's hoping I draw the high hand!'

"From then on it was nip and tuck between us. The old don and Padre Ignacio had got used to seeing us around, and nobody asked us why we was prolonging our little business call week after week. Squint and I settled down to make our plays, and we both done our damndest, I'm telling you! I sweated over Spanish till I could handle it without gloves, and then I got the idea of teaching Luceela English, which was a grand little notion, if I do say it myself. I had it all over Squint there, because he didn't have no idea of grammar and rhetoric and similar branches, and Luceela and I'd set in the patio by the hour exchanging sentiments in English while Squint would gloom in his chair and try to butt into the conversation with his dilapidated dialects.

"But when it got dark, and he'd get out Luceela's guitar and start in on one of them mushy Spanish love songs, it was his innings, and I was on the bench and out of the game for keeps. And I could see I was due to lose out if I didn't take action. So I got down to solid thinking and pretty soon I struck it.

"I figgered that if Luceela wasn't blind, Squint would never have got a look-in. And I remembered reading about folks getting cured of blindness. Of course I knew it wasn't a sure thing that Luceela could be cured, but the way things were going between her and Squint, I couldn't overlook any chances, no matter how slim they might be. From what I could gather, by pumping the old don and Padre Ignacio, cautious, she'd always been that way, and they'd never had a real doc look into the case.

"That may look funny, but when you know those folks, it ain't so odd, after all. They're all for taking things just as they come—they don't kick when they draw poor cards, but just lift their shoulders and let it go at that. And they hate to start anything—one day looks pretty much like another to them, except that to-morrow always looks better than to-day, when it comes to getting right down to brass tacks. So they'd just let Luceela grow up blind, and I ain't saying that she wasn't just as well off, neither. I never saw a girl any more contented with things as they come than she was. But I could see that it suited my case to have her able to judge between Squint and me by something besides our voices and language, and so I got busy.

"By prodding old Padre Ignacio, between naps, I found out that there was an old boy right on the next plantation who'd studied medicine up in New York, and was supposed to be something extra flossy in the way of surgery. He didn't practice much, the life down there being so even and healthy that folks generally die of old age and too much sleep and wait quite a while about doing that, but by all I could extract from the don and Padre Ignacio, this Doctor Hilario Zuluoga was exactly what I needed in my business.

"So one day I saddled up my mule and traveled over to his place, which

was pretty much like the Hacienda of the Sweet Saints. The doc was having a nap in his patio, and when I laid eyes on him, I could have laughed right in his face. He was fatter than the old don, fatter than Squint, even fatter than Padre Ignacio himself, and he was uglier than the three of them put together! But he was wise—I could see that in two shakes.

"I told him that I had a sneaking sort of notion that Luceela might be curable, and, of course, I jollied him up a lot about his reputation and science and the rest of it. You've got to mix with Spanish people to learn how to apply salve right—they've got it down to a fine art. The doc got interested right off. He was wild to try his hand at a big case, and he admitted that if he could put across a cure for Luceela, he'd be famous all over the peninsula, and he wouldn't take a cent for his services, win, lose, or draw. That made me feel better, because I didn't just see how to use Hookfinger's roll for anything like doctor's bills, and my private funds weren't over and above flourishing just then.

"The upshot of it all was that the doc packs up his kit of tools and comes back with me to the hacienda, where Don Ramón and Luceela made him welcome as a friend of mine. What do you know about that? Here I was, a total stranger, grafting on 'em for weeks at a stretch, and all I needed to do was to say that the doc was with me! You don't find 'em like that up here! Not any!

"The minute the doc laid eyes on Luceela, he give a little yelp of delight and pulled her into the sun.

"'Let me see those little eyes of thine,' he says, gentle and reassuring. 'Aha! Just as I thought! We shall have thee seeing like a miracle with the least of difficulties!'

"And he was for pulling off his coat and starting right in, then and there.

But the old don was afraid, and Padre Ignacio had some sort of an idea that blindness was a visitation from Providence, and that it wouldn't do to go against it, and, finally, Squint Leary raises a terrible fuss about it, and got 'em both all stirred up. He says he's heard of operations killing healthy people hundreds of times, up in the States. He begs the don not to take no chances with his daughter, and he keeps egging on the padre to butt in with his side of the case, until the doc was fair frantic with rage at the whole crew of 'em, and ready to pack up and hike back without a try at curing the girl.

"But Luceela was simply wild at the notion of getting her sight, and between her begging her father to give the doc a chance, and me slipping in a word now and then to keep things smooth, we got the decision postponed till next morning, and the doc was fixed up with a room and a few hundred brown cigarrillos and a chair in the patio along with the rest of us.

"As soon as I could, I got Squint into a corner and told him to keep his hands off.

"'But you went back on your word!' he says. 'You ain't playing fair! What kind of a deal is it, to give that girl a chance to size me up with her eyes? That's pulling cards off the bottom of the deck, Johnny,' he says, 'and I serves notice on you here and now that I ain't standing for it!'

"'You howl all you please about not getting a square deal,' I says, 'but how about Luceela? Do you think she's getting an even break if she has to keep on being blind when she might see? Do you want her to stay blind all her life just because she might marry you if she can't get a look at you? Not much! Luceela's in this three-handed game of ours, Squint, and I'm out to see that she gets all that's coming to her!'

"'But, Johnny,' he argues, 'don't you see how I'm fixed? Luceela's happy

the way she is, and she'd be just as happy always, and if she marries me, she'll be a darned sight happier if she don't see! She—she says she likes me, Johnny. How do you think she's going to feel when she gets a slant at me? For God's sake, let her alone!'

"'No!' I says. 'She gets her chance. That's flat!'

"'Then wait till things is settled between us,' he begs. 'Let her choose before she gets a look at either of us. And if she picks me, I swear I'll have the doc over the day we're married! How would that do? Don't be too hard on me, Johnny!'

"'That would be a fine little joke to play on a blind girl!' I comes back. 'Letting her marry you and then get her eyes open! Not much? She's going to have a chance to choose with her eyes as well as her ears, Squint, and I'm here to see that she gets it!'

"And I had my way—I generally do when I'm set on it. The next morning the doc and Luceela and I got the don and Padre Ignacio in a corner and talked 'em over, with Squint trying his best to spoil the game. But Luceela knew how to handle her dad and the priest to the queen's taste, and pretty soon they gave in. The doc fixed up a room for the operation, had the Maya women boil a few tubs of water and scrub it from floor to ceiling, and then he got to work.

"It was wonderful the way he handled those fat fingers of his! I never saw nothing like it! It only took him two or three minutes, and then he got bandages on Luceela's eyes, closed the shutters in her room, and stretched rugs across 'em to keep out every speck of light; and by the time she came out of the ether, the house was quiet again. The doc was a wizard at managing them Maya servants, and he had 'em walking on eggs and holding their breath, while the don and Padre Ignacio and Squint sat in the patio, talking in whispers.

"The doc said it would be a couple of weeks before Luceela could take a chance at trying her eyes, and he settled right down to watch her in the meantime. It was a pretty dismal spot, with Luceela locked up in her little dark room, and Squint so blue he wouldn't even smoke, and the old don ready to weep half the time and sleep the rest. I wasn't feeling any too gay myself, for I knew that if the operation didn't succeed, I'd lose out with Luceela forever, and I hardly dared to hope that it would. My luck never did hold out long, and I figured that I'd strained it right heavy, finding the doc so close by and getting the operation performed without no serious trouble. So none of us felt extra happy, except the doc. He was grinning to himself all the time, pleased to death at being busy with his profession again, and perfectly sure everything would turn out all right.

"He took a couple of looks at Luceela's eyes, in the dark, and told us that they'd be all right, if nothing happened to complicate things, but I reckon we none of us felt absolutely sure about it until the great day when the bandages was due to come off. And I was right about my luck, too. The morning when the doc was ready to take 'em off, I came down with a grand case of—guess what! *Measles!* I must have picked 'em up from some of the Indian kids that was always running around the plantation, but no matter where they come from, I had 'em and had 'em something fierce! Of course, the doc shoved me off to one corner of the house, quarantined me absolutely, and wouldn't let me so much as look out of the window. I didn't feel much like doing anything, neither. Measles sound funny, maybe, but if they hit you when you're past thirty, you won't do no great amount of laughing—take it from me!

"So the bandages come off with me

lying as far away from the scene as they could get me, and too sick to care what happened, anyway. Pretty soon the doc come into my room, grinning all over.

"'It is perfect!' he says. 'She sees! She sees!' And if I hadn't had the measles, I'll bet he'd have kissed me right then! Them Yucateco men are always kissing each other, you know. And if it was the measles that stopped him, I'm glad I had 'em, for the doc was sure one gosh awful homely citizen!

"For twelve mortal days the doc kept me there, although I was feeling all right in six. He wouldn't let Luceela come anywhere near me, which was right, of course. Measles are pretty hard on eyes, anyway, and they'd have blinded her sure, if she'd caught 'em just about then. He wouldn't even let the don or Squint come to see me, and when the padre came to offer consolations, he disinfected the poor old man in the patio until he was like to choke!

"He'd tell me how Luceela was getting along, though, and it was mighty funny, one way. You see, she could see all right, but she didn't know what she was seeing until she got her fingers on it—then she could tell. Her eyes didn't tell her anything at first. She couldn't judge distances a bit, and she used to have to shut 'em to get through a door or go by a chair.

"Queer, ain't it? But it's natural, when you come to think of it. We all have to learn what things look like. Suppose you never saw a camel, for instance—what would you think if you run into one some dark night? Well, I judge that was how it was with Luceela—she had her sight the same as the rest of us, but she didn't know how to use it. And she had a great time learning, while I was lying up there with the measles.

"I could hear her laughing in the patio, and now and then I could hear

Squint's voice telling her which was chairs and which was tables. And it worried me some, for Squint didn't sound downhearted enough. I was crazy to get out and give Luceela a slant at me! I ain't exactly stuck on my looks, but I felt pretty safe in matching 'em against anything she'd seen so far—with nobody to look at except the doc, whose face would make a mule shy if it saw it quick; Squint, who was worse; the old don, who wasn't no better; and the padre, who trailed right along with the others.

"So when the doc let me come out into the patio, after fumigating me till I was half smothered, I was all set to make a horrible hit with Luceela. The doc made quite a grand-stand play of it. He got her out of the way and smuggled me down all unbeknownst, so as to give her a pleasant little surprise. When he had me nicely fixed up in a chair, he called her, and she came out, slow and cautious, feeling her way just like she used to.

"Hola!" yells the doc. "What have I told thee, little rebel? Open the eyes! There must be no more of this pretending to be blind! Open the eyes and see what I have brought thee!"

"Luceela opens her eyes and looks at me. She didn't have the least notion who I was, of course, and I was so tickled to see her again that I couldn't open my mouth. Pretty soon she gives a queer little groan and turned her head away.

"Is it—is it a man, then?" she says, half crying.

"*Por supuesto!*" shouts the doc. "Of course! And a man thou knowest well, too. Guess his name!"

"I cannot—bear—to look—upon him!" says Luceela, slow, like that. "He—he—is so—so hideous!"

"And she skips back into the house, sobbing like a kid, while the doc and I stared at each other, absolutely flabbergasted. After a minute the doc works

it out in his head, and laughs like it was the best joke he ever heard.

"I see it all!" he giggles. "She has seen none save her father, the good priest, myself, and the Señor Leary. And she has formed her ideals upon us. Figure it to yourself, my friend! She thinks you hideous because you resemble us so little! *Que barbaridad!* I must tell the others!"

"And off he waddles to spread the merry jest around the household. It didn't look so awful funny to me, though. I could see, easy enough, how it had happened. Here was this girl with a brand-new pair of eyes and no experience in using them. She gets a slant at her old father, about as beautiful as a mud idol. All she sees is that he is her father—the nice, kind-hearted old boy that she's been loving all her life. She don't know nothing about how a man ought to look, so she naturally believes that he ought to look like her dad! And then she sees the old padre, that's been almost as close to her as Don Ramón himself, and that she likes almost as much—and he confirms the notion that male beauty consists in looking as much like a horned toad as is humanly possible. And when the doc, who's just got her eyesight back for her, chimes right in with the prevailing scheme of decoration, she's more convinced than ever. So, when Squint shows up, and matches the other three, I leave it to you if it ain't natural for her to consider the matter settled.

"But seeing how it come to happen don't make me feel any better about it. While I'm sitting there, waiting for 'em to come in and give me the laugh, I can see that if I aim to alter Luceela's ideas as to my looks, I've got my work cut out for me. But I didn't really size up the situation until Squint showed up, pulling her along with him. She was trying to hang back, crying a little and keeping her head turned away from me.

"Have no fear, Luceela of my heart!" says Squint, soothing. "My good friend Johnny is not so ill to look upon as you think. He is but strange to your eyes, accustomed only to the sight of us others. Gaze upon him, my heart, and see that I speak truth!"

"Luceela takes a quick peek at me, and I looked as pleasant as I could, of course, feeling grateful to Squint for trying to be white about it, but seeing plain that it was all up with me—even before Luceela whirls around and hides her face on his shoulder.

"Oh!" she sobs. "I cannot! I cannot! I can endure to look upon his face when it is in repose, but when he smiles—*Madre mia!* How could the kind Lord make me so frightful?"

"Squint pats her shoulder, reassuringlike, and looks at me over her head, lifting one eyebrow till I thought the ugliness of him would wilt the palm plants in the court.

"You see how it is, Johnny!" he says. "Your hand looked high before the draw, but it looks like I filled my royal straight, don't it?"

"Luceela hugs him, not understanding what he says, and thinking he's trying to hand me a little comfort.

"Oh, Es-squint!" she says, soft and affectionate. "How noble thou art, to speak for me and try to atone for my rudeness to thy friend. I know now that thou art as good as thou art beautiful, and *Dios mio*, how beautiful thou art!"

"She stands off from him and looks at him the way a dog looks at a man it likes. Squint grins at me, embarrassedlike.

"You see, Johnny," he says, apologetic, "there simply ain't no accounting for tastes!"

Johnny fell to drawing an intricate pattern upon the table top, dipping his finger into the remains of my fearful drink. I felt the need of relieving the tension by a change of topic, and brought the conversation back to the prosaic.

"Did you finally buy the land for your Boston friend?" I asked gently. Johnny did not look up from his pattern.

"No," he said. "Don Ramón wouldn't take my money. He made me a present of the deed."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed. "That's carrying hospitality pretty far, isn't it?"

"Not exactly," said Johnny, still intent upon his arabesques. "You see, it was all in the family—and the don and me is partners, too. I'm up here now buying machinery for the hacienda!"

"The family?" I quavered, suspicion suddenly dawning upon me. "Have you been pulling another of your trick stories on me?"

Johnny met my injured gaze, a twinkle of mischief in his black eyes.

"Honest, Percy," he protested, "I didn't mean to give you no wrong notion. You didn't let me finish. You see, when Luceela got to thinking it over, she come to the conclusion that so long as Squint had his fatal beauty, it wasn't fair to let him get everything. So she married me, to sorta even things up! But I reckon she'll always remember Squint as the beautifullest lad she ever seen. She's upstairs now," he added suddenly. "That's why we're stopping here. Come on up. I want to hear what she'll say about your looks."

He surveyed me wickedly.

"She'll like you, all right!" said Johnny.

And the worst of it is that she did!

Canary Fritz and Mimi Jaune

BY
ELMER BROWN MASON

THERE is a legend in New York that Bleecker Street was once lined with neat Dutch houses, their doorsteps scrubbed white. Then it became less orderly and more human with the advent of the Irish. Within our own time came the Teutons, and after them the French, while to-day the brightly clad sons and daughters of sunny Italy lean from the tenement windows and fill the air with the strains of "La Bella Napoli" and the scent of garlic and the streets with countless olive-hued bambini.

Close to where Thompson Street runs into Bleecker stands a solidly built four-story mansion, long ago remodeled into a tenement. There is an extra, pepper-box story at the top, where dwelt the last survivor of the German invasion, Hans Baeder, son of Fritz Baeder and his good Frau Gertrude. And in the tiny shop to the left as you go up the steps—mind the third; it is broken—lived and conducted her business Madame Guyot, daughter of long-dead Monsieur and Madame Lemaire, and widow of Monsieur Guyot, of shadowy and sacred memory.

Beneath, between, and all around, loved, quarreled, married, and multiplied Facceni, Celli, Guidi—their laughter hushed only when the feeble wail of a new-born babe told the street of

another welcome mouth to feed, or the black-plumed hearse bore away some daughter or son of a warmer clime whose soul had sped before.

To the quickly shifting population it seemed that Hans Baeder had always inhabited the pepperbox on top of the old mansion. Hans, alone, knew how long Madame Guyot had tended her tiny shop, and he was not a communicative man.

As for Madame Guyot, she spoke often and proudly of when her parents—both teachers of the danse to the very rich, mind you—had lived on Fourth Street, just off Washington Square; and more vaguely of Monsieur Guyot, a saintly man, and handsome—like a god! Poor Marie! She was far from handsome herself. Even making allowance for her forty-odd years, she never could have been beautiful, and now—we must say it, but let us whisper—she was ugly, ugly as the nightmares of little children. It is true her arms were round and firm, and her neck, when her waist was open during the sweltering heat of midsummer, shone whiter than the top of an ice-cream cone. But her face! We raise our hands—in private, be it well understood. Her face!

Hans was a big, stooping man, who wore thick, round spectacles and shabby clothes. Forty-six years he owned up

to, but the street called him "the ancient one." The pepperbox on top of the building was solely his. It was kept religiously locked, and clean as a pin, and it was full of carefully preserved and neatly piled newspapers, dating back for thirty years. It was, also, the shrine of "Canary Fritz."

Canary Fritz was a reincarnation. In his first life he had been the property of old Fritz Baeder, and as such had been handed down to his son. Two mates he had outlived, and when he had chirped his last chirp, had left behind him numerous descendants, one of which had inherited his name. The new Canary Fritz had been a wonderful singer, had been true to a single mate, and had been survived by but two children. His life had been brief. Too large a caraway seed had cut him off in his prime, and his title had passed to his only son.

For eleven long years the third of the name lived, mated with several saffron wives, and begat many children. Then—tragedy! Mimi Jaune, the cat of Madame Guyot, penetrated beyond the locked door, and that was the end of Canary Fritz, the third.

No more pleasant greetings as Hans climbed the steps—with due regard for the broken third one—no more talks on Sunday afternoons over the yard-long counter. War, black war between the little shop and the top of the building, while all below, between, and around seethed with interest in the hostilities.

Mimi Jaune suffered from indigestion. That poisonous yellow bird! Mimi Jaune mysteriously developed a limp. Accusation! Stolid denial. Persecutor of dumb animals in the upper story! Hans' face averted when he came home in the evening, and Mimi Jaune, indignantly protesting, snatched to a heaving bosom.

Hans was an engraver, and earned liberal wages. He was reputed rich. Certainly he could not have spent a fifth

of what he made, and his life was as regular as a clock, as unchanging as the sequence of the seasons.

For two weeks in the summer, his arms full of bird cages, he disappeared into the country. The rest of the year he worked, read his papers in the evening, and most of all tended Canary Fritz, now in his fourth reincarnation.

Madame Guyot led a thrifty life, and one equally above reproach. Each year she refused a husband—some handsome, hulking son of Italy, with an eye to her savings, and, perhaps, too, somewhat influenced by the round arms and white neck; for the face—well, the face! The rest of the time she minded her tiny shop and sold fragrant garlic, long strings of crimson peppers, loaves of bread, and pennyworth of sweets—and between ourselves they were generous ones—to the bambini; there are always pennies to buy sweets among the children of the poor. But most she cared for Mimi Jaune, the poor, lamed cat—he had the temper of a fiend, and dogs for blocks feared him—as she had cared for preceding Mimi Noirs and Blancs and Tigres, and once even for an animal whose colors had been so variegated that it had been poetically christened Mimi Nuancé.

A year the war waged between the store and the top story. On madame's side, active accusations, tongue-lashings, insulting calls to Mimi Jaune to beware the lamer of animals! On the man's, stolid silence, an entrance without a greeting—look out for the third step—the bang of a door high up above, and then the welcoming song of Canary Fritz, the fourth.

The time was near at hand when, in due course of seasons, bird cages under his arm, Hans would leave for his two weeks in the country.

One sultry evening he rounded the corner of Bleecker, to find all Thompson Street in a wild turmoil. Grief and fury had replaced song and laughter,

and with them had gone the Italian banker, the guardian of all the neighborhood's savings. It was he who rode in a splendid automobile, gave gold-engraved certificates of deposit as unquestioned as currency in the quarter, and, through whom, for the last ten years, money had been sent to the old ones left behind in far-away Italy.

Hans had seen other such angry crowds in his day—his own savings were safe in a staid German institution—and he went on as placidly as circumstances would permit. Turning in at the door of the old mansion, he paused instinctively at the third step—and from the tiny shop strange sounds came to his ears. Madame Guyot's face—that face!—was pillowed on her round arms, and she was weeping. Hans stopped, through very force of habit started to ascend the stairs, hesitated, and then passed in beneath the festoons of garlic and red pepper.

"What is it, Madame Guyot?"

"My money—all my money is gone, the savings of twenty years, ever—ever since my sainted husband died."

"How could you trust that Italian?"

"He paid such good interest, seemed so rich." And she wept anew.

"Have you no money at all?"

"None. Not even my stock for this month is paid for."

Loss of money is the one evil without remedy among the poor. What people in other spheres use as pretexts for grief, pass, here, as inevitable happenings, and are accepted as such, but the loss of money—that is something different!

Never before had Hans faced such a situation. With all his strength he yearned for the peace of the top story

and the welcoming song of Canary Fritz, the fourth—he was a better singer than his father, that bird. Instead, he plainly heard the sobs of Madame Guyot, saw her bowed head, the face hidden—that face!—on her round bare arms. Suddenly the realization of what this meant to the weeping woman came over him, and every hidden spring of Teuton sympathy and sentiment burst open and overflowed into his heart.

"Madame Guyot, I have much money. I will lend you some. The investment is good; you have a fine business."

Outside, the roar of the angry crowd swelled louder.

"Madame Guyot, stop crying, and take my money. I lamed Mimi Jaune. I owe it to you—damages."

There was no answer, and the sobs of the woman formed a faint diminuendo to the bold crescendo from the street.

"Marie, your husband—that sainted man—I owed him money."

The sobs ceased, and, head still bent, Madame Guyot spoke:

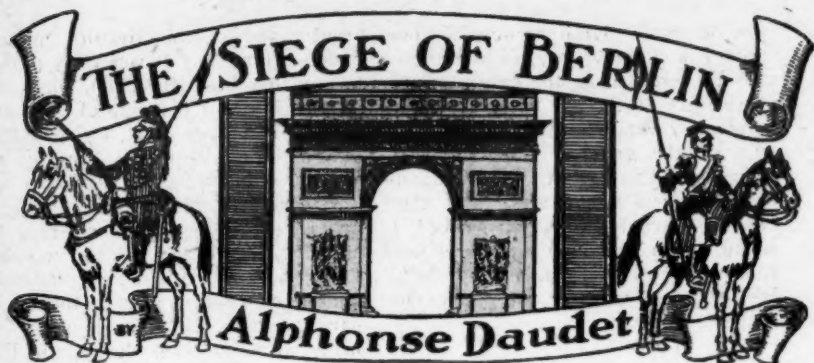
"I am a wicked woman, Hans. You owed my husband no money. I never had a husband. I invented him. I am so ugly!"

The tragedy of this lifelong lie, its pitiful pride, dawned slowly on the man, and he understood.

"I will be your husband," he said, as if simply stating a fact, and he touched her bare arm. "And I did not lame Mimi Jaune."

"I know it," said Madame Guyot, and raised her face—that face—beautiful, now, with happiness.

High up above, Canary Fritz began to sing.



The terrible conflict now shaking Europe gives peculiar interest to Alphonse Daudet's little short-story masterpieces of the Franco-Prussian War. At this writing the French are again fighting gallantly to stay the relentless progress of Germany's magnificent fighting machine. Will they fail a second time? Will there be a second "Siege of Berlin" at Paris? Or, this time—? For the December number we have had translated another of these "Monday Tales," as Daudet called them.



When I went up the Avenue des Champs Elysées with Doctor V—, reconstructing from the bullet-scarred walls and sidewalks the siege of Paris. Just before reaching the Rondpoint de l'Etoile, the doctor stopped and pointed to one of those great corner houses which are so pompously grouped around the Arc de Triomphe.

"Do you see those four closed windows up over the balcony there?" he asked me. "In the first days of August—that terrible August of last year, so full of tumult and calamity—I was called there to attend a severe case of apoplexy. It was the home of Colonel Jouve, a patriotic old cuirassier of the First Empire. At the outbreak of the war, he had taken this apartment with its balcony overlooking the Champs Elysées. Can you guess why? That he might witness the triumphal re-entry of our troops. Poor old man! The news of Wissembourg reached him as he was getting up from the table. Upon reading the name of Napoleon at the bottom of that bulletin of defeat, he fell back, prostrated.

"I found the old cuirassier stretched at full length upon the floor of his room, his face deathlike and bleeding as if he had received a terrible blow upon the head. As he lay there, he looked like a giant. With his handsome features, his fine teeth, his crisp white hair, he seemed nearer sixty than eighty. His granddaughter knelt beside him, crying. She strongly resembled him. Seeing them side by side, one was reminded of two beautiful Greek medallions struck from the same die, the older one dull, its outlines a trifle worn, the other bright and clear cut, with all the brilliancy of a first impression.

"The child's grief touched me. She was the daughter and the granddaughter of soldiers. Her father was an aid-de-camp on MacMahon's staff, and the sight of that fine old hero stretched out before her brought to her imagination another picture no less terrible. I did my best to reassure her, but at heart had little hope. It was a severe case, and at eighty— For three days, in fact, the patient remained in a stupor. Meanwhile, news of Reichshofen reached Paris. You recall how we

were deceived. Until evening we believed it a great victory, twenty thousand Prussians slain, the crown prince a prisoner. I do not know by what miracle, by what magnetic current, an echo of the great national rejoicing reached our poor patient, deaf and dumb with paralysis as he was. But that evening, when I approached his bed, I found him a new man. His eye was almost clear, his tongue not so thick. He was able to smile, and twice he stammered:

"'Vic-to-ry!'

"'Yes, colonel, a splendid victory!'

"And as I gave him the details of MacMahon's great success, his features relaxed, his face brightened.

"When I went out, I found the granddaughter waiting for me outside the door. She was weeping.

"'But he is out of danger!' I told her, taking her hands.

"The unhappy child had not the courage to reply. They had just announced the true story of Reichshoffen. MacMahon was retreating, his entire army cut to pieces. We looked at each other in consternation. She was heart-broken. She was thinking of her father. But I trembled at the thought of the old man. Surely he could not survive this fresh shock. But what should we do? What but let him enjoy the illusions that had brought him back to life? But in that case we must lie.

"'Very well, I will lie to him!' said the heroic girl, quickly drying her tears. Then, with radiant face, she went back to her grandfather.

"It was no easy task that she had taken upon herself. The first days were not so difficult, for the good man's brain was still confused and he was as easily deceived as a little child. But as his health returned, his ideas became clearer, and it was necessary to keep him in touch with the movements of the

armies, and to manufacture military bulletins for him. It was truly pitiable to see that beautiful child, night and day, poring over her map of Germany, pinning little flags on it, trying to contrive a glorious campaign. Bazaine was advancing upon Berlin; Froissart was in Bavaria; MacMahon was pressing on toward the Baltic. In everything she asked my advice, and I aided her as best I was able. But it was the grandfather himself who helped most in that imaginary campaign. He had conquered Germany so many times during the First Empire! He knew every move in advance: 'Now see where they will go. This will be their next step.' And his predictions always coming true, he took great pride in them.

"But take cities, win battles, as he would, it seemed we could never move fast enough for him. That old man was insatiable! Each day, upon arriving, I would learn of some new feat of arms.

"'Doctor, we have taken Mayence,' the girl would tell me, meeting me with a heart-rending smile, and through the door I would hear a joyous voice crying, 'We move! We move! In eight days we will enter Berlin.'

"At that moment the Prussians were within eight days of Paris. We asked ourselves if it would not be best to remove our patient to the country. But once outside of the city, and the condition of France would have told him all; and I found him still too weak, too stunned from the effect of the first shock, to let him know the truth. We decided to remain.

"The first day of the investment I went up to their apartment. Well I remember it! My heart was heavy, for the gates of Paris were closed, fighting was going on under her very walls, her outskirts had become frontiers. I found the old man sitting up in bed, jubilant and proud.

"'Well,' he told me, 'the siege has begun.'

"I looked at him. I was stupefied. 'How, colonel, how do you know?'"

"His granddaughter turned to me.

"Oh, yes, doctor. It is great news. The siege of Berlin has begun.' As she spoke, she took up her sewing with a little affectation of composure. How could he have suspected the truth? He could not hear the cannon firing from the forts, and although unhappy Paris was filled with gloom and forebodings, he saw nothing of it. All that he could see from his bed was a glimpse of the *Arc de Triomphe*, and, in his room, surrounding him, a collection of bric-a-brac of the First Empire well fitted to nourish his illusions—portraits of field marshals, engravings of battles, and a picture of the King of Rome in baby clothes; great consoles, heavily ornamented, and loaded with imperial relics, medallions, bronzes; a bit of stone from St. Helena under a glass globe; and numerous miniatures of a bright-eyed, much-becurled lady, in a yellow ball gown with leg-of-mutton sleeves. It was all these things—the consoles, the King of Rome, the marshals, the yellow ladies, those short-waisted, high-girdled figures whose stiff and artificial lines were considered the height of grace in eighteen hundred and six—gallant colonel—it was that atmosphere of victory and conquest, more than anything we were able to say, which made him believe so naïvely in the siege of Berlin.

"From that day on our operations were greatly simplified. Taking Berlin was nothing more than a matter of patience. From time to time, when the old man grew tired of waiting, we would read him a letter from his son; an imaginary letter, of course, for nothing now came into Paris, and since Sedan, the aid-de-camp of MacMahon had been confined in a German fortress. You can imagine the agony of that poor child, without news of her father, knowing only that he was a prisoner, deprived of everything, sick perhaps—

you can imagine her agony at being compelled to represent him in joyous letters, a little short, perhaps, but that would be natural from a soldier in the field, advancing daily farther into a conquered country. Sometimes she had not the heart for these letters, and weeks would go by without news. But the old man would grow restless, would not be able to sleep, and immediately a letter would arrive from Germany, and she would gayly read it at his bedside, keeping back her tears. The colonel would listen religiously, smiling wisely, approving this, criticizing that, or explaining to us such passages as were a trifle obscure. But where he excelled was in his replies to his son.

"'Never forget,' he would write to him, 'that you are a Frenchman. Be generous to these poor people. Do not make the invasion oppressive for them.' Then would follow suggestions without end, delightful little sermons respecting the proprieties, the courtesy due to women—in short, a complete code of military honor for the use of conquerors. He would add some reflections upon politics in general, and the conditions of peace that should be imposed upon the conquered. These last, I need not tell you, were not severe: 'A war indemnity and nothing more. What good would it do to take their provinces? Would it be possible ever to make a France out of Germany?'"

"He would dictate all this in a steady voice, with such candor, and such a beautiful faith in his country, that it was impossible to listen to him unmoved.

"In the meantime, the siege was steadily progressing, but not the siege of Berlin, alas! It was a time of severe cold, of bombardment, of epidemics, and of hunger, but, thanks to our care and to those evidences of indefatigable tenderness which multiplied about him, the serenity of the old man was never for an instant ruffled. To the very end

I was able to obtain white bread and fresh meat for him. There was none for any one else, of course, and you can imagine nothing more touching than those breakfasts, eaten by the grandfather with such innocent egotism. The old man would sit up in bed, fresh and smiling, his napkin under his chin, while his granddaughter, a trifle pale from her privations, guided his hands, made him drink, and helped him to eat all those good things which were forbidden to her. Then, refreshed by his repast, comfortable in his warm room while the bitter wind blew without and the snow whirled against his windows, the old cuirassier would recall his campaigns in the north, and tell us for the hundredth time of that terrible retreat from Russia on which they had had nothing to eat but frozen biscuit and horse meat.

"Do you understand what that means, my little one? We ate horse-flesh!"

"I well know that she did understand what it meant. For two months she had eaten nothing else. From day to day, as convalescence approached, the patient made our task more difficult. That numbness of the senses and the limbs which up to this time had aided us was beginning to disappear. On two or three occasions the terrible volleys from the *Porte Maillot* had made him start, his ear as alert as a hound's. It was necessary to invent one last victory for Bazaine at Berlin, and to explain that salutes were being fired in honor of it at the Invalides. Another day, when we had pushed his bed close to the window—it was the Thursday of Buzenval, I believe—he clearly saw the national guard as it formed in front of the *Avenue de la Grande Armée*.

"What are those troops doing there?" he asked. Then we heard him grumble between his teeth: 'Badly drilled! Badly drilled!'

"Nothing came of this, but we real-

ized that it was necessary to take greater precautions. Unfortunately we did not take precautions enough.

"One evening, upon my arrival, the child came to me greatly troubled.

"To-morrow they enter,' she said.

"Was the door to her grandfather's room ajar? Looking back now, I remember that his face wore an extraordinary expression that evening. It is probable that he had heard us. But we were speaking of the Prussians, while he was thinking of the French and of that triumphal entry for which he had been waiting so long—MacMahon coming down the flower-strewn avenue to martial music, his son riding at the marshal's side, while he, the old cuirassier, in full uniform as at Lutzen, standing on his balcony, saluted the tattered flags and the eagles blackened with powder.

"Poor Father Jouve! Doubtless he imagined that we would not permit him to take part in that glorious occasion for fear he would be overcome with emotion. For he said nothing to any one, but on the following day, just at the hour when the Prussian forces advanced somewhat timidly down the long avenue that leads from the *Porte Maillot* to the *Tuileries*, an upper window opened softly, and the colonel appeared on the balcony, wearing his helmet, his long cavalry sword, and all the glorious trappings of an old cuirassier of *Milhaud*. I still ask myself what effort of will power, what new lease of life, had put him on his feet in full war harness. But one thing was certain—there he was, amazed at finding the avenue so wide, so still, the blinds of the houses closed, Paris as gloomy as a vast pest-house, flags everywhere, but, strangely, only white flags with red crosses, and no one going forth to meet our soldiers.

"For a moment he must have thought himself mistaken.

"But no! There, from behind the

Arc de Triomphe, came a confused rattling, a black line advanced into the morning light. The flashing of helmets, the beating of drums drew nearer and nearer, and under the Arc de l'Etoile, accented by the rhythmic tramp of regiments, by the clashing of sabers, resounded the strains of Schubert's triumphal march!

"Then, in the mournful silence of the place, a cry rang out, an-awful cry:

"To arms! To arms! The Prussians!"

"And the four uhlands of the advance guard, looking up toward the balcony, saw a majestic old man stagger, fling out his arms, and fall. This time Colonel Jouve was dead."



UNSOLVED

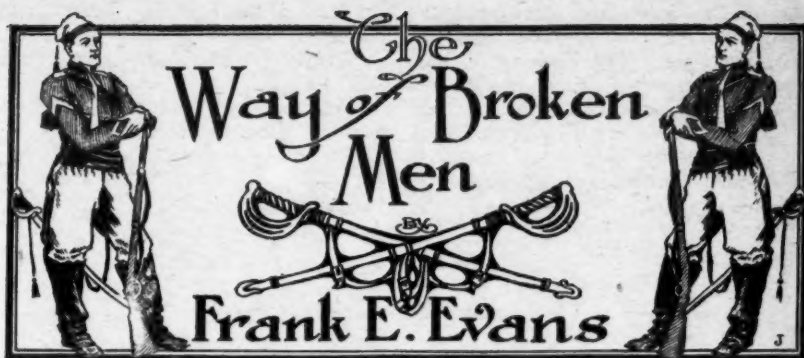
DAWN dowered her with purity,
The priceless pearl of morn;
In dawn's white fires her soul was wrought,
Its fadeless beauty born.

Noon touched her lips with lips of flame
That quivered with desire,
And on the altar of her heart
He lit a quenchless fire.

Night took her in his arms and spoke
Of love's immortal themes,
And in her eyes thereafter shone
The witchery of dreams.

And oft I think of her as dawn,
And oft as noon's delight,
But all in all she is to me—
The mystery of night!

ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH.



T was scarcely ten minutes after they had crossed the Place du Gouvernement and descended the steps leading to the Café du Spahi before the trouble began. When they found their way through a haze of Algerian cigarette smoke to a table, a long-haired, pallid Frenchman was explaining, in verse, the shadow pictures on the stage. The pictures were clever and grotesque, and the verses, pitched in a singsong voice, seemed to delight the patrons as much as the shadowy figures that moved so wonderfully across the canvas screens. About them were soldiers in all the gay uniforms of France's colonials: smart Chasseurs d'Afrique, in tight-fitting tunics of peacock blue; stolid Zouaves, in baggy breeches, with red-and-white turbans set above their peasant features; colorful Spahis and artillerymen. There was a scattering of fat shopkeepers and their placid women, but the military was in the majority.

Margaret Schuyler, seated between her brother Lawrence and Lieutenant Commander Barclay, of the United States steamship *Buccaneer*, felt vaguely that one of the verses was aimed at their party, for furtive and amused glances in their direction quickly gave

way to outbursts of laughter. She was sure of it when, after the following verse, a soldier seated next to the stage turned sharply to look at them. His was the only uniform of its kind in the café—a double-breasted tunic of somber black with red facings and green epaulets across his broad shoulders. The skirts of the tunic were buttoned back, and about his waist was wound a blue sash. She was struck mostly, however, with his well-bred features, and when he turned back to his comrades, she saw that his back had the undefinable stamp of a gentleman. Her brother had caught the soldier's interested scrutiny, too, and he whispered:

"Did you notice that chap, Margaret? He's a soldier of the Foreign Legion. Looks like a gentleman, and he probably is, for they say their ranks are full of men who in almost any other service would have a commission."

The shadow pictures and the verses came to an end, and a Zouave, with cropped head, shouted to the singer. His turbaned comrades roared at the quick reply, and turned to look at the Americans. All this they accepted as harmless badinage, a custom of the Café du Spahi that would soon exhaust itself, and the two men smiled reassuringly at Margaret Schuyler. A Chas-

seur, with blond mustaches, took his place at the piano on the stage, and the soldiers shouted their approval. His tune was a catchy one, and the long-haired young man sang it with a spirit that belied his frail appearance. As the song went on, and its indecencies were revealed, Lawrence Schuyler and the naval officer looked uncomfortably at each other. Fortunately, its suggestiveness was cloaked in argot that robbed it of its worst, but they greeted the closing verse with relief.

They had paid their score and were ready to leave when the singer motioned to the Chasseur. Then, with a leering smile at the Americans, he audaciously began a verse in broken English. Schuyler and Barclay were on their feet, their faces white and grim with the insult, when the café suddenly broke into a riotous tumult. Above it all rose the terrified scream of the singer, and Margaret Schuyler saw him, above the heads of her neighbors, pitching in full flight through the screen at the back of the stage, his legs spread wide like a frog's. In the center of the stage stood the soldier of the Foreign Legion, pulling his tunic back into place. At the tables, the soldiers were bellowing their delight, and above the din rang the cries:

"La Legion Etrangère! Vive la Legion!"

Through the bursted screen, at this inopportune moment, limped the singer, his face distorted with rage, his clothes twisted and bedraggled. He made a clumsy dash at the legionary, and again, so quickly that Margaret Schuyler could not follow his movements clearly, the soldier had him high above the stage, ready to propel him through the screen. He turned abruptly to the happy, almost hysterical colonials, and, his white teeth flashing, sang out to them in French. The effect was magical, for Turcos and Zouaves, Spahis and Chasseurs, leaped to the tops of tables and

chairs and broke into the thundering chorus of a marching song, their boots pounding out the refrain of "youïpaida!" The legionary bowed as if in assent to a petition, and the tumult quieted. Margaret Schuyler suddenly knew that something dramatic, something that held in its grip even these rough soldiers of Algeria, was to come.

She caught up her skirts, and her two companions, smiling at her action, swung her up on the table and steadied her there, while the drama swiftly unfolded.

She saw the legionary lower the man easily to the floor, and as the singer's face swung toward her, the agony of a great fear was on it. The legionary knelt on the breast of the unresisting man, and the murmur of bass voices drummed in her ears as he whipped the sword bayonet from the scabbard at his left hip. She wanted to scream, to appeal to these rough, virile soldiers, but just then the legionary turned until his eyes found hers. He doffed his red kepi with unconscious grace, and addressed her in faultless English:

"The soldiers of France offer their humble apologies, mademoiselle."

Then absolute silence, broken by another scream that was lost in a mighty shout. The Frenchman, his lips slavering and his head bobbling, slunk off the stage. One hand was pressed to his right check, and Margaret Schuyler saw that blood was trickling from his ear.

Silenced by the mystery of it all, unable to fathom its significance, they started toward the door. Abruptly the noise died away, and, as they passed, Margaret Schuyler saw that every man in the café stood silent at the tables, facing the door through which they were to go. A moment later, they stood at the edge of the Place du Gouvernement, and Lawrence Schuyler whistled for a carriage. Above them, the palms rustled uneasily, like great wings fan-

ning the air. Veiled forms moved out from the black edges, crossed through the moonlit center, and were lost again in the darkness. The walls of the mosque stood out in a gray patch across the plaza, and the heavy quiet of an African night belied the tumultuous scenes they had just left.

"It was all so unreal, so theatric, in there," laughed Margaret Schuyler nervously; "but anything could be possible in such a place." She waved her hand comprehensively toward the city climbing up above them. "That poor wretch, stumbling off with the blood on his face, will haunt my sleep to-night."

"It was a rather tight corner for a moment or two, Miss Schuyler, but your brother and I could no doubt have handled it quite as satisfactorily and not so brutally as that legionary. Of course, that touch of bestiality on his part was quite natural, for the Foreign Legion is mostly recruited from the riffraff of European services, and"—Lieutenant Commander Barclay paused for a moment—"some of our own country's as well."

"That nasty songbird got all he deserved," spoke up Lawrence Schuyler hotly. "As for that Foreign Legion chap, he was superb. I'd like to have met him, riffraff or no riffraff, and told him how indebted we are. What chance would the two of us have had if he had not taken the situation in charge?"

"He must have been either an Englishman or an American, and he was, as Lawrence says, superb in a way. Only I shall never forget the horror of it all. Here comes our carriage, Mr. Barclay. We shall see you soon again, I hope. Good night!

"You were almost rude to him, Lawrence," she chided, as the carriage swung uphill toward their villa on Mustapha Superieur.

"Well, he was decidedly unfair," grumbled her brother.

"You don't like him, do you?"

"No, Margaret, to be quite frank. Simpson, who was a classmate of his at the academy, always said that he had the reputation of being a 'fortune hunter,' and there was something else that Simpson wouldn't tell me, something that he had done to a fellow officer, a shipmate, at that."

"You never told me this before."

"I never saw the necessity before. Since we've been out here, you've seen a lot of him, and I've thought lately that you were growing a bit fond of him. They tell me that the *Buccaneer* is to lie here for another month, broken crankshaft, or some such thing, and you'll see more of him. He's forever alluding to people of wealth and position, and I don't think for a moment that he's blind to the fact that you are a Schuyler and what the newspapers call 'heiress to the Schuyler millions.' I may be doing him an injustice, but he doesn't ring true to me. Now you've got all that out of me, and I'm not sorry, either."

"You're a goose, Lawrence," she protested, but she was silent for the rest of the drive.

Margaret Schuyler sat long that night at an open window, staring out into the garden below, patched with moonlight and fragrant with plants. She was probing, without reserve, her feelings toward Lieutenant Commander Barclay, searching them for the first time. Yet each time that she tried to visualize him, hoping that a clear picture would help her to a better knowledge, his features would blur as if a shadow had intervened. When she tried to brush the shadow away, there always came, clear cut as a diamond, the bronzed face of the legionary, his white teeth flashing and his red kepi raised above his well-kept hair.

At first she found it diverting, amusing, in a certain sense. Then it annoyed her intensely that a stranger, a soldier of fortune at the best, should

invade her most intimate thoughts. Yet when she gave up in despair and turned to her bed, through her thoughts flashed detached bits of talk that the navy man had held with her, and it came to her that, through them all, like garish threads in a pattern, ran names associated only with great wealth or isolated social power. It impressed her oddly that she had not noticed their frequent recurrence before, and that Lawrence had. She knew, as any girl of her age, irrespective of class, would have known, that Barclay had become an earnest suitor. She recognized calmly, too, that she had not discouraged his attitude, and that she was, in reality, on the border line of a girlish fancy, a line that might easily be crossed within the stay of the *Buccaneer*, if matters went on as they had. And, as she closed her eyes, she was aware that an undercurrent of distrust, faint but flowing steadily on, had crept into her mind.

The mellow strokes of a ship's bell in the harbor measured the hour of one as she and her brother passed under the shady arcades of the Boulevard de la Republique the next afternoon. The toll of the other craft came to them in a pleasant medley, and Margaret Schuyler felt the unrest of the night dissipate in the brilliant sunlight that bathed the white city. They were to lunch at Gruber's with Doctor Ripley, the senior surgeon of the *Buccaneer*. Something had evidently detained him, so they took their seats at a table placed under the shade of the arcade, where they could watch the life of the busy boulevard.

The wind from the desert behind Algiers' bulwark of green hills was stealing through the date palms of the Jardin d'Essi on their right, tempering the air deliciously, billowing the brown nets spread from the fishing luggers in the harbor below them. Steel abortions, high-pooped, squat-nosed, and with engines perched far aft, were at anchor.

The gray bulk of the *Buccaneer* dwarfed them, but from every other ship the tricolor of France spoke of peaceful supremacy in the waters of the Mediterranean. A French torpedo boat was steaming in the harbor entrance, her crew at quarters. Farther out rose plumes of smoke, and the sticks of a Mediterranean tramp showed above the horizon. Between the outer edge of the boulevard and the fringe of the shipping, the land dropped away in a series of terraces, piled high with the casks and bales of commerce.

They saw their host, Doctor Ripley, hurrying toward them, and with him a colonel of the Foreign Legion, a man of gigantic frame, whose fierce mustaches and smiling blue eyes contrasted oddly.

"I want to present Colonel Renaud, of the Foreign Legion, Miss Schuyler," said the doctor. "You know I am what the navy calls a 'Mediterranean cruiser.' The colonel and I are old friends, and he is to lunch with us. We have been old friends ever since I came out here in the eighties, when the legion was sowing the fear of France in the tribes of Sidi-bel-Abbes."

The talk naturally turned to the famous command, in whose ranks men who once bore commissions in the imperial forces of Russia or Germany shoulder their rifles at elbow touch with peasants from the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine. The colonel's regiment, they learned, had just returned from an expedition to Tonkin, and was en route for the campaign in Morocco. "And are there any Americans in your legion?" asked Margaret Schuyler.

"Only two," and the colonel twirled his fierce mustaches and smiled at her. "One I found by chance in our last expedition. He was a private then, but now he wears the '*medaille militaire*,' and I made him a sergeant major for his gallantry in action out in Tonkin."

"You must tell us, colonel. We scent a story."

"We were moving upriver against a pirate fort," the colonel went on, "and just as we came in range, our leading launch broke down. Stanley—that is his name—elbowed the coxswain out of the way and made repairs, while the pirates were pouring in their heaviest fire. That done, he took command, swung the machine gun in her bows on a flotilla of junks that was bearing down on us, rammed and sunk the leading one, and handled the gun so beautifully that the others were either beached or sunk. He afterward told me that he had been a lieutenant in your American navy."

"Why had he left it?" asked Lawrence Schuyler.

"I never asked," replied the colonel simply. "Men join the legion for many reasons. Some for adventure, some because of a woman. Men who have served their country without disgrace join our colors because we offer a good soldier a wider field of action and more fighting than any other command in the world. You may not know that the flag of the legion differs from the flag of France. The word '*patrie*' is not on it. We only ask that they be brave and honest and, if they bring their life secrets under our colors, we do not search them out. Stanley may reenlist after Morocco, and then, if he takes the oath of allegiance to France, we will give him a commission."

"There was a Lieutenant Stanley," volunteered Doctor Ripley, "who resigned from the navy five years ago. He had in some way incurred the enmity of a slightly older officer. This officer lodged a false report against the youngster; a woman's name was implicated. Rather than defend the charge, and bring her name into possible notoriety, Stanley resigned. The truth is generally known in the service now, but Stanley has not been heard from

since that time. It's an almost forgotten case."

"Who was the other officer?" asked Margaret Schuyler. "It seems such a pity that the navy should have lost the one and kept the other."

"That," replied Doctor Ripley urbanely, "I would rather be excused from telling. He is still on the active list."

Lawrence Schuyler launched into the story of the Café du Spahi. At its conclusion, Colonel Renaud twirled his fierce mustaches and chuckled.

"It was Sergeant Major Stanley, late lieutenant in your navy, I should say," was his amused comment. "He acted very properly, Miss Schuyler, and I shall thank him for you. To-morrow we will sail for Morocco. You will be here, I hope, at this hour, to wish us Godspeed as the legion marches by."

The colonel left them, his fierce mustaches towering above a swarm of Arab gamins clad in gunny-sack rags. They saw his arm shoot out, copper coins flash in the sunlight that bathes Algiers, and then a heap of agitated rags rising and falling as the gamins fought for his largess.

"It was rather odd," observed Lawrence Schuyler, "that Barclay told you nothing about our adventure last night when he came aboard. Perhaps you navy chaps are so used to them, though, that you don't think about them."

"It was rather odd," replied Ripley, and Margaret Schuyler found herself wondering if there was any significance in his laconic speech.

An hour later, the three of them alighted from a carriage at the top of the Casbah, or native quarter, and dismissed the driver. From the harbor of Algiers the Casbah looks like a ragged wedge of mosaic, with its splashes of pink, ocher, and blue set in the frame of the white city. As they passed down its twisted alleys, the simile faded, and Kipling's line, "yells, bells, and smells,"

seemed more fitting. They were emerging from the gloom of the Rue de la Mer Rouge into the sunlight of the modern quarter when they came face to face with their legionary of the Café du Spahi, and Margaret Schuyler could not help it that her heart jumped suddenly within her. Her brother held out his hand impulsively.

"We are indebted to you, Mr. Stanley, in a measure that we can never repay. This is my sister, Miss Schuyler, and Doctor Ripley, of the navy. Now you must, you simply must, come along with us to Gruber's and let us talk it all over with you."

Stanley demurred, but the three combined their persuasions, and he laughingly consented. The girl was forcibly struck by the look in his eyes as he wavered in his decision. She had never seen its like in a man's eyes, or she would have known it as the hunger for a man's own kind that comes only from years of exile in strange lands.

"I was looking for a deserter," he told them as they passed along the boulevard to Gruber's. "He was a decent chap, an ex-Austrian officer, and, to tell the truth, I hope he gets away. They don't love our uniform any too well up there in the native quarter, and the chances are against his hiding there."

They found a table under the arcade, facing the harbor, and were soon rehearsing the experience of the night before. Stanley laughed like a schoolboy when Margaret Schuyler told him that she could never forget the horror of the singer, with the blood trickling through his fingers.

"That's an old tradition of the legion," he explained. "Most of the colonials are jealous of us, you know, and there are just enough Germans in the legion to fan the feeling. Naturally, we have fights galore with them, for an insult to the legion never goes unanswered. I fancy it all began with an

expedition to Dahomey or into the Tuareg country. At all events, we have adopted a cheerful tribal trick of splitting the lobe of the right ear of the offender. It's really no worse than the old custom of piercing ears for earrings," and he laughed at her rueful assent.

"So you took the unspeakable actions of the Frenchman last night as an insult to the legion?" asked Lawrence Schuyler, smiling.

"That was the least of his offense."

"We met your colonel here at lunch, and he was adorable," broke in Margaret Schuyler. "He told us that you would probably reenlist after Morocco, and be commissioned."

The legionary's face suddenly grew sober.

"I have been thinking of it," he answered. "There's no other service in the world with better traditions, or a finer lot of fighting men, unless——"

He was half turned in his chair, and the girl saw that in his line of vision lay the *Buccaneer*, a cloud of shore boats about her gray sides, and the flag at her taffrail clear in the sunlight. He was turning back to finish his sentence, but she saw him stiffen, his lips set firmly, his gray eyes looking straight ahead. Lieutenant Barclay, in full dress, was coming toward their table.

He was making official calls, he said, and then Margaret Schuyler turned to present him to Stanley. The legionary was standing, with his hand raised in stiff salute to his red kepi, his face devoid of expression except where the muscles at the corners of his mouth twitched. Instinctively she knew that he was mastering some powerful emotion. Barclay, his face flushed, first extended his hand. The other's rested at the salute, and Barclay slowly withdrew his outstretched one.

In the awkward silence that marked the meeting, a half-formed suspicion flashed into her mind. She saw that

Doctor Ripley was watching keenly the two men, one in the blue of the American navy, the other in the picturesque dress of France's crack fighting corps. Her mind sprang alert to the task of finding the solution of the doubts that had assailed her through the night.

"Mr. Stanley has just promised me, Mr. Barclay, to lunch with Lawrence and me at Sherry's on Easter Monday," she smilingly announced. "That is, of course, if he gets back from Morocco in time."

Across the table, she caught Lawrence's look of blank astonishment, and the appreciative smile on Doctor Ripley's face, and she went coolly but desperately on:

"We have just lunched with Colonel Renaud of the legion. Don't you think it is a wonderful service, one that would even tempt men from our flag, Mr. Barclay?"

"On the other hand," returned Barclay acridly, "I had always thought of it wholly as a refuge for broken men; men who, for one reason or another, found it impossible to remain under their own colors. Some people call them renegades, outcasts, but it matters little what you call them. 'Broken men' is as good as any term."

The legionary sat outwardly unmoved either by the shocked protestations of Lawrence Schuyler and the surgeon, or by the caustic outburst of the naval man. Margaret Schuyler read the scorn in Doctor Ripley's eyes, and then looked questioningly at Stanley. His gray eyes were fixed steadfastly on Barclay's tense face, and his left hand tapped, tapped at the hilt of his sword bayonet.

A fantastic thought urged her on, and she cautioned lightly: "You should be more careful, Mr. Barclay. Don't you know that the rash man who offends the legion pays for it? You had better look to your ears. Which is it, Mr. Stanley, the right or the left?"

A smile crossed the legionary's face, and he answered, at first in the same tone of raillery:

"Always the right, Miss Schuyler. I hardly need the reminder, though, for the legion would never forgive me if I neglected it. I cannot help but think that if we had adopted this same barbaric tradition in the navy—for I was an officer in the navy, Miss Schuyler—I would have found good use for it five years ago."

The spirit of raillery had gone, and the girl leaned quickly across the table, and asked: "Why was it you left?"

"A shipmate forced me out of it, and he used a most formidable weapon," came the slow reply.

"And what was the weapon?" she persisted.

"A petticoat," was the laconic answer.

There was no bitterness, only a shade of scorn in Stanley's voice as he went on, and she found herself wondering what his life in the last five years had really been.

"The legion has what you term 'broken men,' but they are not men to be sneered at, Barclay. And those same 'broken men' have a way at times of putting the brand where it belongs, that decent men may read it, and good women."

Barclay listened in dogged, sullen silence after his outbreak of bad temper until Stanley called him directly by his name. Then his face went a deep red and his eyes slowly turned toward Margaret Schuyler's. He read in them something that made him bite his lower lip nervously and stare unseeingly out across the harbor. The tension was hardly propitious for a continuance of the party. As they arose to go their several ways, Miss Schuyler held out her hand to Stanley.

"Then it is Sherry's, Easter Monday?" she questioned.

"On my word as a legionary," he smiled.

"The word of one of the 'broken men' seals it," she answered gravely.

"You are going to the bal masque at the admiral's this evening, Miss Schuyler?" asked Barclay, who had recovered much of his usual aplomb. "The Van Newkirks, of Baltimore—you have, of course, heard of them—will be there. I'd like to have you meet them. They arrived yesterday on their yacht."

"I think not, Mr. Barclay," she said coldly. "And while I think of it, I have found that it will be impossible to take dinner on the *Buccaneer* to-morrow. Good afternoon."

On the drive back to the villa, Lawrence Schuyler refrained from conversation, but at times he whistled a bar of music to himself or tapped his out-turned shoes with his stick; signs of deep thought. They were almost home when he looked sharply at his sister, and observed:

"That was a whopper you told Barclay."

"What was?" she demanded innocently.

"Sherry's and Easter Monday."

"I had my reasons for it," she replied calmly, "and, besides, I'm not going to let him waste his life away in the legion."

"You girls are queer creatures. By the way, are we going to see the legion off to-morrow? I'd like to see more of Colonel Renaud's 'broken men,'" and he laughed in a spirit of mischief.

"Yes, we are, Lawrence."

From the shops of the Rue Dominique, the cafés of Rue Babazoum, the villas of Mustapha Supérieur, and the blind alleys and evil-smelling cellars of the Casbah, Algiers came to cheer the renowned legion on its way to fresh glories in Morocco. Schoolboys paraded arm in arm along the Boulevard de la République, shouting their ever-

lasting "*A bas les Juifs*!" Arab beggars displayed their deformities in quest of sous, and the chorus ladies from the casino flirted joyously with the colonials. Burnouses of spotless white, turbans and uniforms of every bright hue, and here and there the somber blue of a squad of American bluejackets from the *Buccaneer*, made the boulevard as gay a picture as one could find in all Europe. Never was such a lure in Algiers as the fighting men of the Foreign Legion.

They came, twelve hundred strong, a river of red kepis with a moving shuttle beneath of white leggings; and the steady symmetry, the pendulous rows of white, worked their hypnotic spell on those who watched. The blaring music of bugles and drums died away, and Margaret Schuyler thrilled like a Frenchwoman to the grim, relentless tread of these "broken men" marching to war. Then the air was vibrant with music, for the famous band of the legion was crashing out the "*Marseillaise*." Company after company swung by, and in their ranks she saw gray-bearded men touching elbows with youths still in their teens, all marching with the insouciant deviltry that only seasoned campaigners wear. On the breasts of many were bright-colored ribbons and bronze medals, and she knew that each one spoke of a valorous deed wrought for France by these "broken men" of alien nations.

The river of red kepis flowed on, white leggings flashed their steady measure, and the veterans of France moved on with devil-may-care swing to the gangway of "the trooper on the tide." The last company was almost past before Margaret Schuyler found her legionary. In his post as regimental sergeant major, Stanley was marching in the rear and on the flank next to the curbing. He would be looking for her, she knew, at the spot where they had parted, and it was more than the

stirring appeal of the "Marseillaise" that thrilled her every fiber. Through the mist that was before her eyes she read the message of his gray eyes, and then the last red kepi of the legion had nodded farewell.

Doctor Ripley joined them as she turned to her brother.

"Superb! The finest marching men I have ever seen," he began. "Barclay missed it."

"And where was he?"

"Barclay had a rather peculiar accident last night coming off to the ship." His face was serious, but she thought she detected a vein of sarcasm in his voice. "Some one—we don't know who, and Barclay was vague—waylaid him on his way to the last boat. The

time was well chosen, as at that hour the terraces down there are deserted. It must have been some one with more than a casual knowledge of naval routine, it occurred to me." This time the surgeon smiled brazenly. "The crew of the pulling boat heard his cries for help. When they picked him up, he had one hand pressed to his cheek and the blood was trickling through his fingers. Nothing serious, Miss Schuyler, quite superficial except for the shock. It will probably leave a scar," he added, as if in afterthought.

"I'd like to know what really happened," she replied slowly. "Was it the right ear, or shall I have to curb my curiosity—until Easter Monday, at Sherry's?"



WORKMEN

OF strands of moss, of twigs rough-dressed,
Of leaves and loam,
The mocking bird, so frail at best,
Constructs his home.

Of tested steel, of costly stone,
And lumber rare,
Man builds, with visions of a throne,
A palace fair.

Then, whether Time, in passing, brings
Sunbeams or rains,
The mocking bird in rapture sings,
And man—complains!

RALPH M. THOMSON.



GOOD farces are almost as rare as good tragedies, and there are dramatists, not George Cohan, who say they are harder to write. They require a special kind of inspiration, the power to let the characters go where they please and do what they please to any degree of unreasonableness, and still to make them, while the curtain is up, real and believable people to the audience that watches them and laughs with them.

To go down in theatrical history as a year of good farces is a distinction not to be despised, and the season 1913-1914, which brought out "Seven Keys to Baldpate," "Potash and Perlmutter," "The Misleading Lady," and "General John Regan," all good farces, adequately presented and admirably acted, is well entitled to such a distinction. Some appreciative person said that there were more laughs in the theater that held "Seven Keys to Baldpate" than in all the rest of New York last winter. That may be true; it is hard to prove, because at "Potash and Perlmutter" one never could tell where one laugh ended and the next began, so thoroughly was the audience in sympathy with the playwright and his people. The success of these farces was a worthy recognition of their success as

plays as well as of their value as entertainment.

And yet, with all due appreciation of the value and the rarity of real humor in the theater, to go down in theatrical history as a season in which, with one exception, the only first-rate offerings were farces, is not an enviable distinction at a time when our theater is supposed to be a mirror of the social, industrial, political, and artistic spirit of the age. And that, also, is true of the season of 1913-1914.

The fact that Sir Johnstone Forbes-Robertson was in New York for many months made the lack of good dramas less noticeable than it would otherwise have been; his *Hamlet* filled so large a gap. There were, besides, a great many plays that were more or less good, good enough to make us forget, temporarily at least, our need of better ones. There was William Hurlbut's "Strange Lady," which pointed the road that our more sincere American dramatists are taking, and in which Elsie Ferguson interpreted so well the part of the ultra-modern young Frenchwoman who finds herself obliged to work out the perplexed problem of matrimonial relations in terms of a Middle Western morality. There was J. M. Barrie's one-act play, "The Will," too slight to be great, but well worth seeing, especially

since John Drew forgot himself and really acted; and Barrie's other play, "The Legend of Lenora," in which a clever theme and a first act as delightful as any that Barrie has given us were made to carry the weight of three other very dull and heavy acts.

"Maria Rosa," a play from the Spanish of Angel Guimera, who wrote "Marta of the Lowlands," would have been a play to remember if it had not been butchered in a false attempt to suit our American minds. It was worth while as a Spanish play, a story of Spanish life and emotion, but it would not bear an adaptation that made it coarse and brutal instead of passionate and primitive. Some day, perhaps, American managers may learn that Americans, more than the people of any other country, can understand anything that is real and genuine, even if it is in a foreign setting. Why should a New Yorker not understand how a Spaniard or an Italian or a Russian feels and acts? Are they not all about him, the stranger peoples? Is it not their presence in his city that makes him what he is? No better illustration of this cosmopolitan appreciation could be found than in the attitude of the audience toward the players in "Maria Rosa." They understood the spirit of Lou-Tellegen, but not that of Dorothy Donnelly, because one, although foreign, was art, and the other was acting.

There were other plays that might be mentioned, but that need not be. And then there was the one exception, the one really good drama of the season, which was notable for its financial failure.

"Change" is a play by J. E. Francis, a young Welsh schoolmaster. It won the prize offered by Lord Howard de Walden for the best Welsh play by a Welshman, and was presented at special performances before the Stage Society in London, where it met the sincere approval of the best English critics. It

came to New York with no advance notices, no picturesque advertising, no billboards. It offered nothing but a play of vital human interest and unusual technical merit, in which every part, down to the smallest, was superbly acted, although there were no advertised stars.

The theme of the play, to quote from the Drama League bulletin, was "the havoc in the wake of progress." It told the story of a Welsh collier, his wife, and their three sons; of the father's rigidity and the mother's tenderness in the face of the changes that education and experience made in the religious and social convictions of their sons. It was full of the humor of character, and one smiled, seeing it, as often as one sighed.

But the critics said the play was gloomy—a good play, but gloomy—and so it failed. It was not gloomy. It was grim, as life is grim. Every one who saw it, and, through the efforts of the Drama League, it had good houses while it lasted, will remember "Change" when he has entirely forgotten even so good a farce as "Seven Keys to Baldpate." It was probably the most-talked-of play in New York last winter among the men and women who talk of plays as plays and not merely as a means of passing an evening.

The very failure of "Change" has been, in a way, the cause of its perpetuation, for so much enthusiasm was aroused over it that Doubleday, Page & Co. decided to publish it in their "Drama League Series" of plays at moderate prices. In Germany and France a published play has always found a large audience. In America we are just beginning to print and to read plays, but this beginning is a very hopeful sign of the times to our dramatists. Few serious plays are successful enough in New York to warrant a run on the road, so the best of our dramatic output, from year to year, is entirely lost

to that large public all over the country that is interested in good drama. It is the hope of the playwright, and needless to say of the publisher, that the printing of these plays will have the double effect of bringing them to their audience, and of creating an interest in them that will be active enough to demand their production on the road. It will be suggestive to see what the reading public thinks of some of the plays already published in the "Drama League Series"—"Kindling," "Her Husband's Wife," "A Thousand Years Ago," "The Great Galeoto."

For the theatrical season now upon us there are the same high hopes that there always are at this time of the year. Each morning's paper in July and August had its half-column interview with some manager returning from abroad who promised the finest offerings of his theatrical career.

There are rumors of Madame Kalish in Eugene Brieux's "Judge's Robe," and of Edith Wynne Mathison in one of Charles Rann Kennedy's "seven plays for seven people," in the series with "The Servant in the House" and "The Winter Feast." The new play, which is already published, is an interesting and poetic story, called "The Idol Breaker." Mrs. Patrick Campbell is announced to appear in Bernard Shaw's "Pygmalion," which is said to have made its London success not through the clever story or the author's wit or even through good acting, but because of the heroine's utterance of a bit of slang which sounds most commonplace to us.

Early in the season Winthrop Ames plans to produce Alice Brown's "Children of Earth." This is the play that won the ten-thousand-dollar prize in a contest in which over sixteen hundred manuscripts by American playwrights were considered, besides many hundreds that were submitted but thrown out on account of some error in fulfilling the

rules of the contest. There are many features that make the production of Alice Brown's play a matter of much more than usual interest and importance. It is the first long play by an American woman who has gained an enviable reputation and has had a rare success as a writer of short stories. It is a serious, strongly dramatic study of New England life, the characters being the same New England types as those of Miss Brown's best-known stories. It is the choice of Winthrop Ames, one of our foremost producers, Augustus Thomas, one of our best-known playwrights, and Adolph Klautner, one of our keenest dramatic critics, who were the judges in the contest. It is sure to be, in matter and in point of view, a distinctively American play. And those who know Alice Brown's peculiarly tender, keen, generous, intuitive sense of values in human relations believes that it is sure to be distinctively a woman's work of the best type. An English writer said, not long ago: "I do not know what proportion of due honor is enjoyed by Alice Brown in her own country, but I sincerely envy America the possession of her genius."

At the other extreme—and interesting because it shows some of the tricks the legitimate theater is called upon to perform for the amusement of the tired business man and his mates—is the announcement of a new melodrama of New York, called "Life," by Thompson Buchanan. It is to be in twenty-one scenes with eighty-two speaking characters, and it is to have, as some of its features, a Yale-Harvard boat race on the Thames, at New London, fought out upon the stage; a debutante ball on Fifth Avenue; the séance parlor of a spiritualistic medium; a massive reproduction of the front of St. Patrick's Cathedral; the governor's house at Albany; the warden's office at Sing Sing; a hotel garden at El Paso; the exterior and interior of a mine stockade in

Chihuahua; and, as a crowning glory, between the scenes, moving pictures to carry on the story of the play. What the play is to be that requires all this is not mentioned in the announcement; it is, of course, of no importance as compared with the fact that the roof of one of the largest theaters in New York will have to be raised to house it. But the announcement was made before the news had reached us that the war devils were loose in Europe. Maybe now a scene can be stretched to permit of the portrayal of a battlefield, with real dead and wounded. For that, too, is "life."

Between these two extremes of the literary drama and the mechanical come the promises of the great mass of plays that make up the output of a season. Some of them bear the names of men whose work is familiar to us; some of them are signed with new names in which there is always hope and mystery. Many of them, we know, will not last more than the week of trial; most of them will be forgotten by the end of the year. But somewhere in the long lists there is a play that will be added to our literature and to our dramatic history, and the hunt for that will keep all of us who love the play at the doors of the playhouses.

The splendid chance that is open to our American dramatists of recognized talent is shown by the number of times that Edward Sheldon's name appears on various lists. He is to have produced, this season, a fairy play after Hans Christian Anderson; a dramatization of Suderman's novel, "The Song of Songs"; a play called "The Bridge of Sighs" for Ethel Barrymore; and another called "The Lonely Heart."

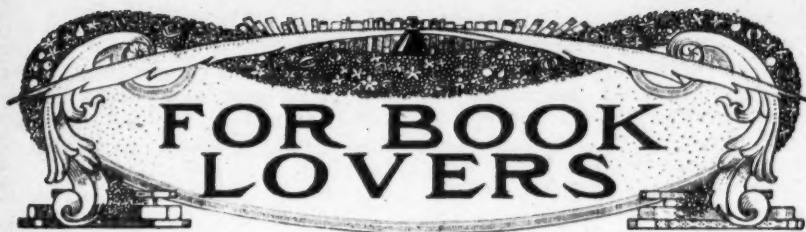
"Wanted \$22,000" is the attractive name of a comedy with which Clayton Hamilton, the valorous dramatic critic, ventures into the dramatic field in com-

pany with A. E. Thomas. Mr. A. E. Thomas is one of the younger American writers from whom people of different creeds expect fine things. He already has to his credit such successes as "The Rainbow," in which Henry Miller starred for several seasons, and the delightful play, "Her Husband's Wife." Clayton Hamilton's two books, "The Theory of the Theater" and "Studies in Stagecraft," have proven conclusively that he knows what a good play is. So there is more than the usual hope for their joint comedy.

Two foreign writers whose work may be counted upon to add interest to the season are Hubert Henry Davies, author of "The Mollusc," one of the best of modern light comedies, who sends us "The Outcast" this year, and B. MacDonald Hastings, author of "The New Sin," who has written a new play for Nazimova.

"The Miracle Man," a dramatization of Frank L. Packard's book, is what George Cohan sends to take the place of "Seven Keys to Baldpate," and no play in all the announcements is more eagerly awaited. George Cohan is always sure of his audience; his plays, even when their plot is commonplace and threadbare, have something in them that makes them humanly attractive. They are as sincerely admired by the dramatists who envy him his mastery of dramatic technique as by the people who enjoy the thing he does without realizing how well he does it.

The story of "The Miracle Man," who lives in the hills just outside of a New England village, and who heals, not as the villagers think, by magic, but by the benignity of his presence, seems to afford opportunity for more serious treatment and more definite character building than the usual Cohan farce. Whether it will be better or not on this account remains to be seen.



FOR BOOK LOVERS

SIR GILBERT PARKER'S new book, "You Never Know Your Luck," published by the George H. Doran Company, confirms the impression of overelaboration which the unwieldiness of the title suggests. The dramatic value of the story is consequently impaired.

The scene is laid in the wheat country of the Northwest, in the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains.

The plot is constructed around an attractive, irresponsible young Irishman, who, after promising his wife to avoid the race track in the old country, has had the misfortune to back the wrong horse. After such an experience, he is unable to face her again, and flees to Canada, hoping to repair his fortunes.

The story begins when he arrives in the wheat region, and meets the heroine, Kitty Tynan.

The characters are all interesting, and the plot is good, but the story moves along in far too leisurely a fashion. It is a story of incident and action, and as such demands corresponding treatment, very different from the type in which the author may indulge himself in pleasant philosophizing by the way.

Some impulse is given to the movement when the wife appears in search of her husband, but even so there is lacking not only the finish, but a good deal of the magnetic charm of Sir Gilbert's earlier books.

"Europe After Eight-fifteen," published by the John Lane Company, may very properly be called "Little Journeys of Sophistication," representing a triangular collaboration by H. L. Mencken, George Jean Nathan, and Willard Huntington Wright.

Clever and amusing as they are, one can easily imagine the steamer-chair loungers on most of the outward-bound liners eagerly devouring them in the hope of assimilating accurate information concerning the enlightening and entertaining things to see and do in European capitals during the nocturnal hours.

Vienna, Munich, Berlin, London, Paris are all unveiled to the uninitiated in their moments of abandon, of midnight hilarity, when the cares that infest the day have been dissipated.

It might be called a colorful, if not exactly ingenuous, little book, and possibly the advice it contains as to how to escape boredom in the world's great capitals may be found useful.



"Vale," the last volume of George Moore's remarkable trilogy entitled "Hail and Farewell," published by D. Appleton & Co., will be, to those who find unflinching delight in his work, the greatest of the three.

It seems futile, almost, to try to explain Mr. Moore's peculiar appeal to his readers. To one, it might be his

liquid clarity of style; to another, his consummate sophistication, or his originality and nonchalant intrepidity in expressing his opinions, no matter how greatly they may differ from conventional views.

In this last book we find the usual glinting of his incomparable wit, his ability to present a character in a phrase, and his curiously complete understanding of the correlating values of life and art. This last is particularly emphasized in this book, for one of its chapters embodies a lecture that he delivered in Dublin on the art of Monet, Manet, and Degas, all of whom he had known.

The rest of the book presents portraits of his friends and acquaintances, his intimate conversations with them, and his intimate reflections by the way, all permeated by the personality and charm of the author.



"The Vanished Messenger," published by Little, Brown & Co., is E. Phillips Oppenheim's last story, and it embodies the usual complexity of plot, variety of incident, and novelty of situation that characterize all of Mr. Oppenheim's stories. It is this that gives one always the comforting assurance that no matter what may be the elements of which it is composed, an Oppenheim story is sure to be a good one.

It would almost seem as if the subject of international intrigue as a theme for a novel had been worn threadbare, but in this case Mr. Oppenheim has again succeeded in reviving it by giving an original turn to his narration.

For the center of interest he has created a fascinating and picturesque villain, a crippled old man who sits in a wheeled chair, resembling nothing so much as a piece of beautiful old ivory. He lives on his fine old English estate overlooking the North Sea, absorbed,

apparently, only in the pursuit of his artistic tastes. In reality, he is occupied in the effort to precipitate a war involving England, and for no other purpose than to gratify a diabolically cruel instinct to make mischief on a large scale.

Involved in his plotting is an American ambassador, the old man's niece, a charming girl who is his most hopeless victim, and the young hero whose cleverness enables him to defeat the old man's schemes and rescue the girl.

It is one of Mr. Oppenheim's best yarns.



Algernon Blackwood has published, through E. P. Dutton & Co., a volume of short stories which he calls "Ten Minute Tales."

They do not really take as long as that to read, most of them consuming not more than five.

It is a most unusual and interesting collection.

They are not only short, but they are vivid and pointed, dealing with what we are wont to regard as the inexplicable phenomena of consciousness. They are not ghost stories in the ordinary sense of the term—nothing half so crude—but should rather be considered as a series of daring excursions into an almost unexplored psychic realm; little tales of the borderland of the fourth dimension.

One of their beauties is that they have received just the sort of treatment that they require, the most delicate handling, subtle shading, and light touches. And yet for all their nuances and half-tones, they deal with obscure but tremendous forces.

A reading of them convinces one anew that all real drama, the drama still waiting to be written, is inevitably and purely psychological.

"The Autobiography of a Happy Woman" is published by Moffat, Yard & Co. under the pledge, as they say, not to reveal the identity of the author, who, they assure us, is well known as a writer and worker.

The book purports to be a record of the author's own life.

Written in journalistic style, the book is apparently meant to interpret woman in the modern economic and industrial world—not the woman cowed by suffering and stupidity, whose initiation is killed, nor the woman of the so-called sheltered life who veils herself and her thoughts if she has any; but the woman who works and does not wail, who looks life squarely in the face to see all that men and women have made of it, and who then seeks to illustrate in her own life the rule of service and self-forgetfulness in happy work.

It is possible that the book may offer guidance and perhaps inspiration to women who believe that there is room for usefulness of a higher kind in the office and factory as well as in the home, and that it may lead into a larger field.

The author evidently has faith that the prevalent unrest among women, the

breaking away from old forms and old ties, is opening the way to development from narrow and materialistic personal views to ideals of a higher type.



Important New Books

"The Auction Block," Rex Beach; Harper & Bros.

"The Younger Generation," Ellen Key; G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"The Place Beyond the Winds," Harriet T. Comstock; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Love's Legend," H. Fielding Hall; Henry Holt & Co.

"The Letter of the Contract," Basil King; Harper & Bros.

"Charles Stewart Parnell," Katharine O'Shea; George H. Doran Co.

"But She Meant Well," William Caine; John Lane Co.

"Twenty-fourth of June," Grace S. Richmond; Doubleday, Page & Co.

"The House of the Dawn," Francis Lynde; Charles Scribner's Sons.

"The Lone Wolf," Louis Joseph Vance; Little, Brown & Co.

"The Story of Duciehurst," Charles Egbert Craddock; Macmillan Co.

"The Valley of Fear," Conan Doyle; George H. Doran Co.

"A Lady of Leisure," Ethel Sidgwick; Small, Maynard & Co.

"Maria," Baroness von Hutten; D. Appleton & Co.



Talks With Ainslee's Readers

HERE you have the story of which we spoke with such enthusiasm in our announcement a month ago—"The Rock-a-Bye Pine," by Melville Chater. Don't you think we were justified in speaking of it as "one of those few-and-far-between little masterpieces that stand out like milestones in the history of a magazine—if the magazine is a good one"? Incidentally, aside from the rare beauty of it, it appeals to us as a more telling indictment of loveless marriage than any sermon possibly could be. We say incidentally, for we should be very much surprised to find that Mr. Chater had any such purpose in mind when he wrote it. The story with an avowed purpose is seldom a good story—very seldom as beautiful a story as this one.



WE have received many war stories since the beginning of this appalling struggle in Europe, apparently submitted upon the old editorial policy that timeliness covers a multitude of sins. And we are almost daily in receipt of inquiries as to whether we particularly desire war stories. We can best answer these by saying that if, in our opinion, a story is up to AINSLEE's standard of entertainment, the fact that it deals with the war will not prejudice us against it. In spite of this, we do not believe that many stories based upon the present war will find their way into our pages. The thing is too stupendous to be seen at close range. At present we are so close to the gigantic canvas that we can only see the great, sweeping brush strokes, the meaningless daubs of paint. We must stand off from it a little—ten or fifteen or a hundred years—before we can see the picture itself, and appreciate the wonderful color of it, with its dramatic contrasts of light and shade.

You will undoubtedly remember the late Stephen Crane's vivid novel of the Civil War, "The Red Badge of Courage." Old veterans could not be convinced that the story was actually written by a man who had

not been through the scenes and suffered the emotions he described, a man, in fact, who was not born until five years after the war was over. And then came our war with Spain, and the announcement that one of the great New York dailies had engaged Stephen Crane to go to the front. Wonderful, thought the readers of his novel. If he could write "The Red Badge of Courage" of a war he had never seen, how much farther could he not go with the conflict before his very eyes? You may remember the disappointing result. His Spanish-war correspondence was little better than commonplace. He was in the position of a man trying to see a six-sheet poster with his nose glued to the billboard. He could not read its message.

Of course, there may be an exception during this present conflict. If there is, we'll welcome it with open arms. But in the meantime we shall content ourselves with printing translations of two or three of the best of Daudet's little masterpieces dealing with incidents of the Franco-Prussian War.



WE consider this a good issue of "the magazine that entertains." We like Moffat's novel of the West. We know that it is an unusual combination of circumstances that enables us to give to collectors of O. Henry, one of the greatest of our American short-story writers, a tale that is not included in his "complete works." We believe that you will find Hugh McN. Kahler's "Handsome Is" a yarn that might have been included in O. Henry's works without arousing any question as to its authorship. We consider "The Red Rosette," "Canary Fritz and Mimi Jaune," "The Law and the Prophets," and all the rest of our short stories thoroughly interesting in their widely different fields. If you share our liking for them, it shows us that your tastes are our tastes. This being the case, we know that you will find this coming issue of

AINSLEE'S an unusually entertaining one. We are sure that you will enjoy Joseph Ernest's complete novel, "Brinamour," as much as we did. And Marie Van Vorst's charming tale of "Der Herr Direktor"; Ethel Train's sympathetic story, "Noah's Ark"; "The Way to Salvation," Nina Wilcox Putnam's delightful account of a man who went through a real adventure before he came to appreciate the homeliness of mid-Victorian bric-a-brac; "Scare-dog Jimmy," a powerful little story by Alice Garland Steele, the author of "The Law and the Prophets," in this present issue; to say nothing of the others, all of them really entertaining.

WHO is "Andrul," the author of "A Fa," "Seb," and "The Indiscretion of the Crown Prince," all three of which appeared in AINSLEE'S? Frankly, we know his identity no more than do our readers. We purchased these stories from a literary agent representing foreign writers, assuming that "Andrul" was an Englishman. Concerning a story recently published in the *Strand Magazine*, the following letter to this agent, from J— D—, of Seattle, Wash., whose standing is of the highest, is of interest:

"DEAR SIR: I would thank you to forward this letter to the author of 'The Horror of Johnson's Flats,' in the *Strand* of June, 1914, issue—or if you can inform me on the point raised below, without troubling the author, I will thank you equally for the courtesy.

"A member of my own circle of acquaintances contributed a story to AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE, July, 1913, number, titled 'A Fa,' and I am sure that the author of 'A Fa,' signing 'Andrul' as a pseudonym, was en-

tirely ignorant that it had been in the past or would be in the future used by another author.

"I am quite sure that the story 'The Horror of Johnson's Flats' has not come to the notice or attention of the author of 'A Fa,' who is a resident of Seattle, temporarily spending the summer elsewhere in this State.

"And from internal evidence of difference in style, treatment, theme, and atmosphere, I am sure that my friend, the author of 'A Fa' (signing 'Andrul' in AINSLEE'S MAGAZINE), is not the author of 'The Horror of Johnson's Flats.'

"I do not think that it is entirely through the prejudice of friendship that—after reading, rereading, and reading again and again—I consider 'A Fa' a classic, which, as a masterpiece of delicate atmosphere and pure beauty of exquisite characterization, will see many re-éditions in the course of time."

Are there two "Andruls"? Or is the writer of this letter the victim of some friend whose craving for literary laurels has tempted him to claim honors which are not his? It is not so very long ago that a chance acquaintance of Booth Tarkington's, a soulful-eyed little woman, unaware of his identity, confided to him that "Booth Tarkington" was her pen name; that she was the gifted author of "Monsieur Beaucaire," "The Gentleman From Indiana," "Cherry," and all the rest of them. Mr. Tarkington was interested to learn that these little things were dashed off on the spur of the moment, a mere matter of inspiration. It was rather discouraging, under the circumstances, for him to reflect upon the time and concentration it had cost him to turn out the same things. But who is "Andrul"?



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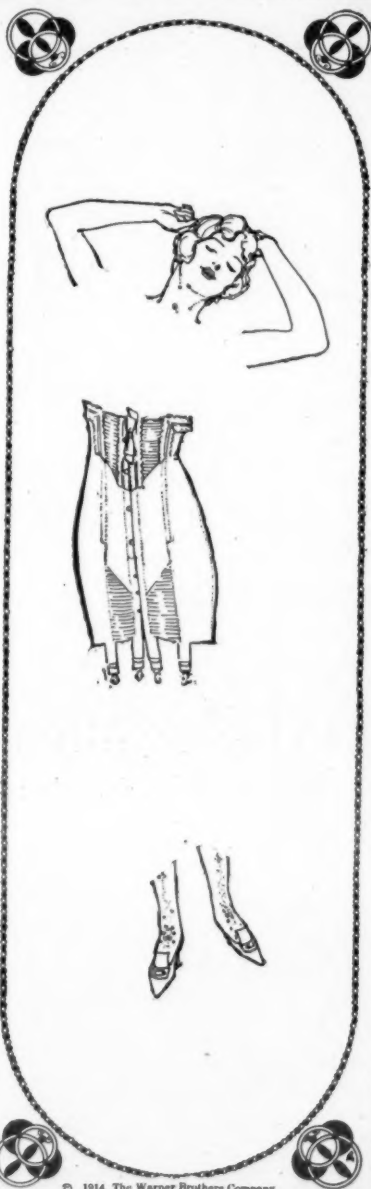
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THE
December Ainslee's

This number of "the magazine that entertains" will contain, complete, a brilliant book-length novel by Joseph Ernest, entitled "Brindamour," and many crisp short stories. The latter include one of particular charm and appeal by the author of "John Tremaine,"

MARIE VAN VORST

Are you reading those fascinating "Stories of the Super-Women" by

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE?

Elizabeth Patterson, the Baltimore belle, who married Jerome Bonaparte, is the subject of his next contribution.

John Fleming Wilson, Ethel Train, Nina Wilcox Putnam and Helen Baker Parker are among the other contributors who make this coming issue a notable one.

Ainslee's for December

For sale November 13th

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At the Opera

IN THE WORLD OF FASHION

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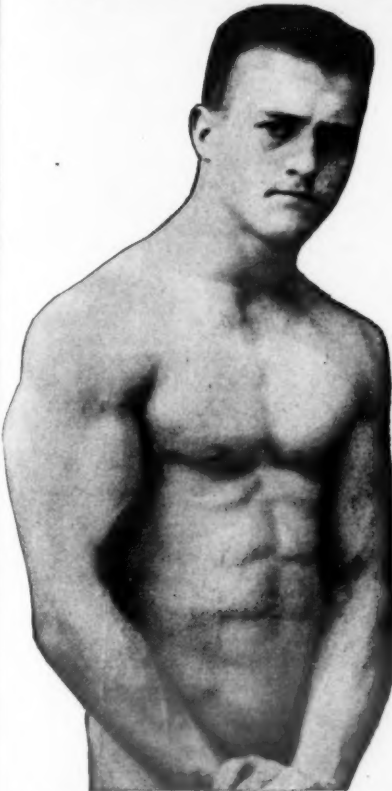
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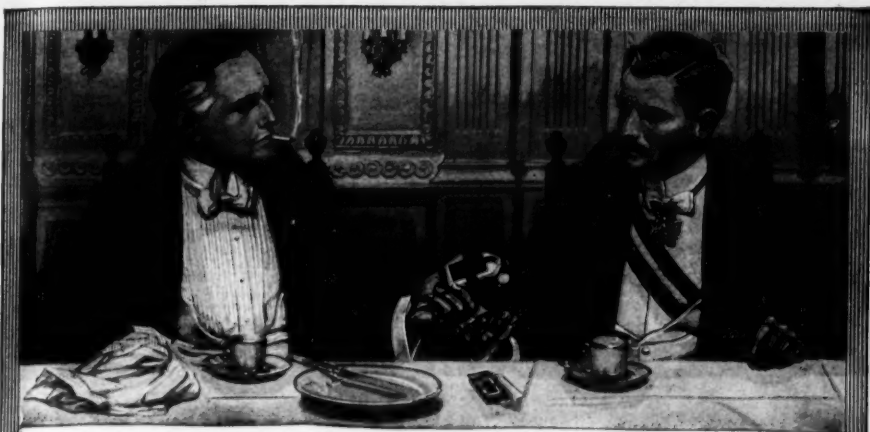
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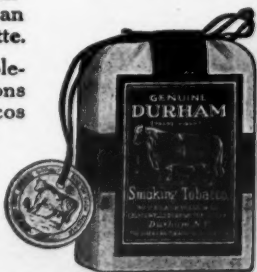
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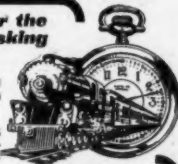
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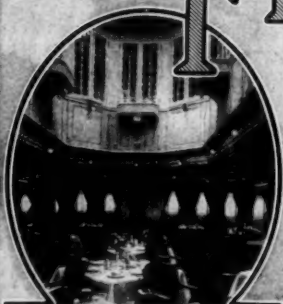
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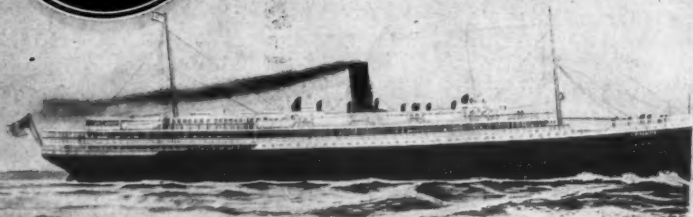
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